LITERATURE PRIMERS

Edited by JOHN RICHARD GREEN

ENGLISH COMPOSITION

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Literature Primers. *Edited by* J. R. GREEN.

ENGLISH COMPOSITION.

BY

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NEW EDITION.

London:
MACMILLAN AND CO.
1881.

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4468
Sept 1900

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PRIMER OF
ENGLISH COMPOSITION.

PART I.

INTRODUCTORY.

CHAPTER I.

DEFINITIONS. SYNTHESIS OF SENTENCES.

1. LITERARY **Composition** is putting words together in order to convey our thoughts to others. Good composition conveys our thoughts correctly, clearly, and pleasantly, so as to make them readily understood and easily remembered.

To express ourselves well we must first have something to say. If we have not been able to come to any definite conclusion about a subject, we should be silent.

We must next choose the right names for the things or actions of which we are going to speak. This is not always easy, for we are apt to talk loosely of quantities and qualities; to say there are "thousands" when there are only hundreds, to call an event "marvellous" when it is only unusual, or to refer to "ages" when there are only years.

Lastly, we must arrange our words in the right way, so that they shall fit one another and combine to make good sense: just as we must put bricks or stones together properly to make a building stand. All language is a construction; it is the building or binding of words.

2. The term **Sentence** is applied to every arrangement of words expressing a complete sense, that is, a thought, judgment, or decision.

Every sentence involves a mental realization of two things and an assertion of some connection between

them. When I say "I am here" I have an idea of myself, of a present place, and of my being in it. When I say "Cain struck Abel" I have the idea of Cain, of his brother, and of a blow passing from one to the other. The verb in the latter case is transitive, in the former intransitive: in each we make no more than one plain assertion, and the result is a **Simple Sentence.** But when I say "James and I met John" I make, in short space, three statements:—I met John. James met John. I and James were together. The result is a **Compound Sentence.**

3. Frequently we have to make statements modified by some qualification. This qualification may be expressed by a single word, as "I ran home *quickly*"; by a **Phrase,** or set of words without a subject and predicate, as "I met him *on my way home*"; or by a **Clause,** or set of words containing a subject and predicate, as "I met him *while he was on his way home.*" Clauses may often be expressed by phrases, and phrases may be shortened into words—*e.g.*, "when he was acting as an enemy," or "acting as an enemy," or "hostilely."

Co-ordinate Clauses are parts of sentences otherwise independent but connected by conjunctions, as "They gave up the attempt and *retreated to their fortresses.*" A **Subordinate Clause** is a clause the construction and meaning of which is dependent on the principal or leading assertion, as "He ran quickly *that he might get home first.*" Sentences containing subordinate or secondary clauses are sometimes called **Complex Sentences.**

A sentence may be both compound and complex; it may convey an indefinite number of statements, and each may be qualified by an indefinite number of clauses. There should, however, in every instance be a leading statement, obviously more important than the others, and giving a unity to the whole. Otherwise the facts or thoughts should be expressed in several sentences.

4. Clauses have been called adjective, relative, adverbial, or conjunctive, according to the parts of speech which introduce them: but it is of more consequence to observe that they are expansions in form, in matter, various modifications, either in the way of extension or restriction, of the main subject and predicate.

Half the art of composition consists in keeping the subordinate parts of the sentence in proper relation to the principal parts. Making the main assertion clear is to a writer what making his house stand firm is to a builder. Details of ornament are minor matters.

5. To this end the practice of **Grammatical Analysis**—or splitting compound and complex sentences into their elements (*see Primer of Grammar*)—is an aid. By a converse process, **Grammatical Synthesis**, these elements, the expressions of the separate judgments a sentence contains, are bound together. Take the following:—

Sir Philip Sidney was wounded.
He was at a battle.
It took place near Zutphen.
The wound was inflicted by a musket ball.
It broke the bone of his thigh.
This led to his death.

These assertions are easily gathered up into a single compound and complex sentence:—

"Sir Philip Sydney, at the battle near Zutphen, was wounded by a musket ball which broke the bone of his thigh and led to his death."

Or take a different kind of construction—

He sacrificed his country.
He sacrificed his friends.
He sacrificed his home.
He sacrificed his personal honour.
He sacrificed them to a cause.
He was now deserting it.
All these facts failed to influence his decision.

Condense thus :—

"That he had sacrificed country, friends, home, and personal honour to the cause he was now deserting did not influence his decision."

[*Syntheses of a greater number of assertions into variously qualified unities may be made to form the subjects of more difficult but highly useful exercises.*]

6. **Modifying phrases** and subordinate clauses often occupy much more space than the principal clause, but the latter is the pivot of the sentence. The qualifications may either—

(*a*) Follow the main assertion;
(*b*) Precede it; or,
(*c*) Be inserted between its members.

Take the following as examples of the three modes of their introduction :—

(*a*) "The castle consists of a square keep or tower, several storeys high, encompassed by a square embattled wall, which has circular towers at each angle."

(*b*) "While the multitudes below saw only the flat sterile desert in which they had so long wandered, bounded on every side by a near horizon, or diversified only by some deceitful mirage, he was gazing, from a far higher stand, on a far lovelier country."

(*c*) "The two opposite parties who professed in specious terms, the one a preference for moderate aristocracy, the other a desire of admitting the people at large to an equality of civil privileges, made the state which they professed to serve in reality the prize of their contention."

7. The first of these is called a **Loose sentence**; because it might end with "tower" and yet convey a distinct and apparently complete sense; the adjective clauses are thrown upon what precedes, as if they were afterthoughts. The second and third, where the assertion does not appear till the close, are called **Periods.** In some instances the former, in others the latter mode of construction is preferable.

8. A succession of sentences relating to the same view of the same subject is called a **Paragraph**, the close of which is generally indicated by the next sentence beginning with a new line. The separate sentences explain or illustrate one another, and have the same kind of relation to the paragraph that the clauses have to the sentence.

A series of paragraphs make up a Theme, Speech, or Essay, or Chapter of a Book.

CHAPTER II.

PUNCTUATION.

THE relation of the parts of a sentence to one another should be made as plain as possible by proper arrangement: but it is sometimes made more clear in spoken language by proper pauses, and in written or printed language by **Punctuation.**

The following are the Points common in English, and the main rules for their use:—

1. The **Full stop** (.), or Period, marks the close of a sentence, whether simple or complex, loose or periodic. It indicates that the construction is complete and that an assertion has been fully made; though other sentences in the same paragraph may follow to modify the thought. The Period is also employed to mark abbreviations, as in Christian names or titles—T. B. Potter; Lord Beaconsfield, K.G.

2. **The Colon** (:) generally indicates that the sentence might grammatically be regarded as finished, but that something follows without which the full force of the remark would be lost:—"Study to acquire a habit of thinking: no study is more important." This point is used after a general statement followed by the specification of two or more heads:—"Three properties belong to wisdom: nature, learning, and experience." A direct quotation is often introduced by a

colon :—"He was heard to say; 'I have done with the world.'"

3. **The Semicolon** (;) is used similarly, but it indicates a closer connection in the clause that follows. Reasons are preceded by semicolons—"Economy is no disgrace; for it is better to live on a little than to outlive a great deal." So are clauses in opposition when the second is introduced by an adversative—"Straws swim at the surface; but pearls lie at the bottom." Without the adversative, prefer a colon—"Prosperity sheweth vice: adversity virtue." Several members dependent on a common clause follow semicolons—*e. g.*, "Philosophers assert that nature is unlimited; that her treasures are endless; that the increase of knowledge will never cease."

4. **The Comma** (,) represents the shortest natural pause in reading or speaking the sentence. It groups the words immediately related in grammar or sense, and indicates where their connection is interrupted. There is considerable latitude in the use of commas. Avoid using them lavishly; mere adjective or adverbial phrases do not require them. The following, for instance, needs none :—

"By carefully pandering to the passions of the half-educated mob you will hardly fail to secure their votes."

But this does :—

"By pandering to the passions of the mob, who in this part of the country control the elections, you will secure their votes."

Some special uses of the comma are worthy of note. It is employed—

(*a*) To separate adjectives in opposition but closely connected :—

"Though deep, yet clear."

(*b*) After adjectives, nouns, and verbs, in compound sentences, where "and" is omitted:—

> "Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,
> Shrunk to this little measure?"

> "He fills, he bounds, connects and equals all."

So with pairs of words:—

"Old and young, rich and poor, wise and foolish, were involved in the ruin of the Glasgow Bank."

Similarly, to separate a series of assertions relating to the same nominative and not connected by a conjunction:—

"He rewarded his friends, chastized his foes, set Justice on her seat and made his conquest secure."

(*c*) Before a qualifying clause introduced by a relative:—

"Peace at any price, which these orators seem to advocate, means war at any cost."

Note that a relative clause not necessary to the antecedent must be marked off by commas; thus:—

"Sailors, who are generally superstitious, say it is unlucky to embark on a Friday."

When the clause is an essential part of the antecedent only one comma is used:—

"The sailor who is not superstitious, will embark on any day." The adjective is followed by a comma because the nominative "sailor" is not immediately followed by the verb.

(*d*) When the nominative is a clause, a comma is often placed after it.

"That he had persistently disregarded every warning and persevered in his reckless course, had not yet undermined his credit with his dupes."

(*e*) On both sides of an explanatory clause, without which the sentence would be verbally complete.

"The shield was oblong, four feet in length and two in breadth, and was guarded by plates of brass."

"The coast, as far as we have been able to explore it, is rocky."

(*f*) After an address—"My son, give me thy heart."

(*g*) After the adverbs, *nay*, *finally*, *at least*, &c.—"Finally, let me sum up the argument."

(*h*) After a nominative, where the verb is understood—"To err is human; to forgive, divine."

The importance of accuracy in the use of the comma is illustrated by the different meaning which its insertion at one place or another may give to such sentences as the following—

"You will be rich if you be industrious in a few years."

Lord George Sackville on trial for an alleged offence was accused of contempt of court for making an ambiguous pause in saying—"I stand here as a prisoner unfortunately that gentleman sits there as my judge."

In the latter instance, however, the ambiguity was perhaps intentional, and it is to be observed that where so much depends on a Point there is commonly some fault in the construction of the sentence. As a rule, beware of relying on the punctuation to indicate the sense: it ought to appear from the words chosen and from their arrangement.

5. The **Point of Interrogation** (?) is used after questions put by the writer or questions reported directly—"He said 'when do you mean to come back?'" It should not be used when the question is reported indirectly—"He asked me when I intended to return."

6. The **Point of Exclamation** (!), used after apostrophes or expressions of violent emotion, should

rarely appear in ordinary prose. It is quite out of place in narrative or historical composition; *e.g.*—

"Hurrah for Argyle at last! From this time forth he is openly a Covenanter."

7. The same remark applies to the **Parenthesis,** ( ) or the still more abrupt break indicated by the **Dash** (—). It has been fairly observed that these signs are often a mere cover for the writer's ignorance of the points: they are however, admissible when a clause is obviously thrust in, having less connection with the rest of the sentence than would be indicated by commas, as:—

"He gained from heaven ('twas all he wished) a friend."

"Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
(That last infirmity of noble mind)
To scorn delights, and live laborious days."

The following is a good example of the proper employment of the dash:—

"At the last stage—what is its name I have forgotten in seven and thirty years—there is an inn with a little green and trees before it."

A colon with a dash after it (:—) frequently introduces a quotation, especially when given as an instance or example.

8. A shorter line (-) called the **Hyphen** is used—

(*a.*) To connect parts of a word divided at the end of a line. Remember to take care that you divide words according to the component parts of their derivation:—anti-dote, not an-tidote; con-sult, not cons-ult.

(*b.*) To connect two or more nouns, adjectives, or particles, so as to form them into a single compound, as—"Dry-as-dust history"; "That never-to-be-forgotten day"; "That man-monkey." Such compounds should be used sparingly.

9. The marks (" ") should be employed wherever a quotation is made, or a speech directly reported. In dramatic dialogue however, they are omitted, it being taken for granted that the words are in the mouths of imaginary speakers.

10. **Contractions.** The following signs are universally recognized:—

i.e., for *id est*, that is to say, to expand or explain.

e.g., for *exempli gratiâ*, for example's sake, to illustrate.

viz., for *videlicet*, to wit, to give an instance or enumerate the parts before referred to generally.

&c., for *etcetera*, and the rest, when all the parts necessary to illustrate the proposition have been named and it would be waste of time to complete the catalogue.

∧, for *insert*. Cobbett calls this sign "the blunder mark."

' The apostrophe before the s of the possessive, and to mark contractions or elisions—

"Nought's got, all's spent
When our desire is had without content."

This latter use should be mainly confined to poetry.

11. **Capitals** are properly employed to mark—

The first word of a sentence, or of a line of verse.
The first word of a direct quotation.
The first personal pronoun, I, and the interjection, O.
Proper names, high titles, and names of the Deity.
Very emphatic words, and names of personified objects.

12. **Italics** are admissible to emphasize. They are of frequent and hardly avoidable occurrence in short treatises like the present, to mark a portion of a sentence or paragraph to which special attention has to be called. But, in ordinary writing, the fewer italics we use the better.

CHAPTER III.

STYLE.

1. STYLE (Lat. *stylus*) is the mode in which we express ourselves; it is the art of choosing words, setting them in sentences, and arranging sentences in paragraphs. It is the architecture of thought. The result of careful and tasteful composition is a good style.

2. Style varies to suit the circumstances of various nations and men, and the temper and manner in which we handle various subjects. As different occasions call for different conduct, so different themes demand different treatment. A familiar letter, a speech and an essay are each regulated by special rules; the proper style of poetry is not the same as that of prose. Good prose merely versified would be but tame poetry; poetry stripped of its rhythm would often appear as turgid prose. Style should be as natural as dress, and fit the time, the place, and the person as a glove fits the hand. But there are limits to this variety. Manners and conduct fortunately differ, or we should be wearied by every one behaving in the same way: but there are rules of civil discipline, of good conduct and good manners, laws that bind and laws that ought to bind us. So it is with style: the rules of grammar are its imperative laws—it must be accurate; the canons of taste its manners—it ought to be strong and graceful.

3. A preliminary question meets us. Whence are the laws of style derived: who enacts them and makes them obeyed: to whom or what are we to refer on difficult or disputed points? Most rhetoricians, ancient and modern, have answered that we must be guided by Custom,—national, reputable, and recent; that is, by the practice of the majority of celebrated writers of our own country, who have lived near our own time.

This is a very useful, and in practice often a decisive test. On many minor points it is perhaps the only

test. Custom holds a real, and, within limits, a legitimate sway over such questions as the naturalization of foreign or the acceptance of new words. It decides on the disuse of old inflections, the shifting of accents and the currency of contracted forms. But in making Usage the absolute or sole standard of Accuracy and Taste there is some confusion between cause and consequence. I am likely to act rightly if I follow the example of good men: but it is not their example which makes my action right. I am pretty sure to compose correctly if I follow approved models. But why are they approved? An author may be famous for political or moral influence, or even for the strength of his imagination, and yet be far from a model of style. If he be a model, it is because he has in his writings conformed to the laws of grammar and taste. A great thinker may have a vicious style; a historian famous for his knowledge of musty records and his power of interpreting facts may express himself in a manner wearisome and dull. Their examples should never be used to justify solecisms or confusion of language, harsh words or lumbering sentences.

4. The parts of speech have, in accordance with the principles of universal grammar, a logical relation to one another which regulates their number, case and time. No amount of wisdom in the writer can excuse the use of a really singular noun with a plural verb, or of the reverse (the Greek neuter plural may be regarded as a collective), or of an ambiguous relative, or of a mixed metaphor. The rules you find in grammars were not made by the grammarians, whose province it is to state and explain, nor by the writers of books, whose province it is to obey them, but by the genius of the language; *e.g.*, the rules of arrangement in an uninflected must be more stringent than those in an inflected speech.

5. The laws of style fall under one or other of two classes—

Those regarding *Accuracy* and *Clearness* are requisite in all kinds of writing to ensure the faithful presentation of thought.

Those regarding *Strength* and *Grace* are more especially applicable to the higher branches of Prose composition and to Poetry.

			Corresponding violations of the rules.
Rules Relating to Accuracy and Clearness in Style.	Purity prescribes the use of	Correct Forms and Concords.	Wrong forms. Solecisms.
		Classic or Good English words.	Barbarisms.
		Proper words, *i.e.*, words fit for the occasion.	Improprieties.
	Perspicuity prescribes	Simplicity.	Round about, inflated or pedantic words or phrases.
		Brevity.	Tautology. Pleonasm. Verbosity.
		Precision.	Ambiguity or Obscurity. *a.* In words. *b.* In sentences, from bad arrangement.

PART II.

ACCURACY OR PURITY OF STYLE.

CHAPTER I.

CORRECT GRAMMAR.

No expression can form part of a good composition unless it be constructed in accordance with the laws of the language to which it belongs. An inaccurate expression may be clearly intelligible, but the habit of inaccuracy is sure to result in confusion.

Every sentence is inaccurate which gives wrong forms of the parts of speech, or violates the rules of syntax. These rules are laid down in English grammars; but as they are frequently transgressed even by standard writers, it is proper here to refer to some of the most common errors: these are of two kinds:—

(*a*) Errors in the use of Single Words or forms.

(*b*) False Concords, *i.e.*, wrong Genders, Numbers, Cases, and Tenses.

A.

Some special cautions in relation to the first head seem requisite:—

1. **The Article.** "A" and "The" should be repeated when they introduce two or more nouns or adjectives referring to distinct things, *e.g.*, "She had a black and white dog." If two dogs are meant it should be "She had a black and a white dog'.' "The Queen sent for the secretary and treasurer" should be "the secretary and the treasurer," unless it means to imply that the two offices were combined in one person.

2. **The Noun.** The wrong number is not unfrequently assigned to foreign words. Addison writes

"The zeal of the Seraphim as the character which is given us of *him*." Seraphim is plural.

The **Possessive Case** suggests several notes.

It is often used interchangeably with the genitive after "of." "My Father's house" and "The house of my Father" are identical: but the latter form is more accurate when the subject is neuter. Prefer "the roof of the house" to "the house's roof"; "the history of Servia" to "Servia's history." Where two possessives, one personal, the other a mere genitive, come together, the result is bad English:—"In Hannibal's march's expected line" should be "In the expected line of Hannibal's march." The possessive, however, is used in expressions of time, as "a long day's march."

Whose is permitted after a neuter; we may say "The country whose fertility is great," but prefer "The fertility of which."

Before a participle in such cases as "The cry of the Church's being in danger" the noun may be in the possessive, but it is like a double genitive and it is therefore better to say "of the Church being in danger." The possessive form only attaches to the last term of a title, as —"The King of France's decree," and generally comes close to the related noun. Hence the awkwardness of saying "England's Mediterranean power": it should be "The power of England in the Mediterranean."

Observe, however, the difference in the following:— "Peter's, Joseph's, and Richard's estate" means that each had a separate estate. "Peter, Joseph, and Richard's estate" means their joint property.

The possessive of one noun is often used wrongly with another noun followed by a relative—"They attacked Northumberland's house, whom they put to death," means they put the house to death: it should be "the house of Northumberland"; "I await the lady's opinion for whose use it was intended," read "the opinion of the lady." "A copy of his idea who made it" is at least a questionable expression. Better read "a copy of the idea of the original contriver" or

"thinker." A more glaring error is employing both "of" and the possessive, as in the phrase—"that of other men's."

Avoid the use of the possessive where its active and passive senses are apt to be confounded—"Have you heard," asked a friend of an old gentleman, "have you heard of your son's robbery?" "Not yet," was the reply; "whom did he rob?"

As regards the *Gender of Nouns*, observe that some masculine forms have a common or inclusive sense, and may without impropriety be applied to females; but note the difference between saying "Mrs. Siddons was the greatest actress," and saying she was "the greatest actor of her age." The latter form amounts to the assertion that she was the greatest genius, among actors and actresses, on the stage.

3. **Adjectives.** One adjective cannot qualify another; in apparent exceptions, as "red-hot poker," "pale-blue sky," red and pale are adverbs.

Some adjectives logically incapable of degree, as, *certain*, *free*, *false*, *true*, *honest*, *square*, *round*, *even*, *accurate*, occasionally admit of comparison with reference to their approach to the standard or the amount of the quality they display. This license, however, should be cautiously used. "More perfect" is hardly admissible. "More preferable," "most entire," are mere redundancies.

Remember to use the comparative of the adjective when only two things are compared. "He is the taller," not the tallest, "of the two brothers." The superlative may, however, go with a singular form when the latter has a collective meaning, as—"the oldest of the family." "His eyes are the worst of his face" means the worst of all the features of his face.

Some words, as "fast," may be either adjectives or adverbs. Be careful to discriminate the one use from the other, and abstain in prose from using adjectives for adverbs, or *vice versâ*. "*Excessive* wrong," "that being the *now* estimate," &c., are incorrect expressions.

Note that an adjective does not necessarily become an adverb by accompanying a verb; *e.g.*—

"Uneasy lies the head," "we get wet."

"Uneasy" may be an adjective, "wet" certainly is.

4. **Verbs.** Some former distinctions between past tenses and perfect participles of irregular verbs have ceased to be maintained; but it is still regarded as a violation of grammar to confound, as is often done, *broke* and *broken*, *bore* and *borne*, *began* and *begun*, *drank* and *drunk*, *stole* and *stolen*, *wove* and *woven*, *arose* and *arisen*, *went* and *gone*.

The auxiliary *be*, which goes with intransitive verbs, is sometimes wrongly used for *have*, which generally goes with transitive verbs, *e.g.*—"I *am* just arrived at Geneva"; "I found she *was* gone out of the house" is incorrect, for the addition of "out of" makes the verb transitive. But when "gone" is used for "dead" it may be preceded by *was*, "Mary *was* gone."

The frequent confusion of **shall** and **will** may be obviated by attending to a few rules and distinctions of some nicety.

In common conversation the 1st person is generally followed by "*shall*," the 2nd and 3rd by "*will*." The word "shall" denotes simple but certain futurity; "will," intention or resolve. In this sense and with this force they are employed in the 1st person. In the 2nd and 3rd the above distinction seems to be not only lost, but almost inverted. The seeming inconsistency is explained when we bear in mind that the motive power of the action is supposed to lie with the speaker. His will is assumed as its source.

"You shall" indicates my conviction of the certainty of your future action in consequence of my determination that it is to take place. Hence the "absolute shall," which in the 3rd person appears most frequently in the promulgation of laws.

In the phrase "you will," as I can have no sure knowledge of your determination; the "will" drops into the sense of a milder or less emphatic assertion of futurity.

In the interrogative "will you?" there is a request to know your wish in the matter. The affirmative answer to this must be "I will," not "I shall." On the other hand, "shall" is appropriate in the mouth of an inferior, in answer to a command.

In the trite instance, "I *will* be drowned: nobody *shall* help me," we have a type of the wrong use of the words: Burns's lines—

> "We *will* drain our dearest veins,
> But they *shall* be free,"

supply a conspicuous example of the correct use.

In some cases the writer may use either form. The expression—"An extract from Mr. Hallam *shall* close the present section" may be defended if the assertion is meant to be emphatic. But "shall" and "will" must never be used together with the same nominative. "I *shall* detain you no longer, but conduct you where I *will* point out" is wrong.

Note. The infinitive of the verb is now only used, substantively, as a nominative. Such a construction as the following is inadmissible in prose:—

> "For not to have been dipped in Lethe's stream
> Could save the son of Thetis *from to die.*"

B.—FALSE CONCORDS.

I. Mistakes in **gender** are almost confined to confusions in the use of figurative language; *e.g.*, "The cities *who* contended for Homer" is an over-violent personification. Observe that "*which*" is no longer applied, as in Shakespeare's time, to persons, except in asking a question—"Which of the brothers?" or in reference to an alternative, "I know not which of the two." "*That*," on the other hand, may be used of both persons and things—

> "We were the first *that* ever burst
> Into that silent sea."

II. **Wrong Cases** occur most frequently in the use of the pronouns, especially when they are sepa-

rated, by some intervening clause, from the nouns to which they refer; *e.g.*—

"We shall speedily become as poor as *them*."

"*He* that can doubt whether he be anything I speak not to."

"*Who* of all the men in the world do you think I saw?"

"*Whom* do men say that I am?"

These and similar errors may be detected by supplying the omitted words, or by changing the construction.

Note that "than" does not govern the accusative—"The Duke of Argyll, than *whom* no man was heartier in the cause" is wrong. Otherwise the distinction between "you love him more than I," and "you love him more than me" could not be maintained.

Observe that "I esteem you more than *they*" or "more than *them*" is equally correct in grammar. But the two phrases have different meanings; the first being equivalent to "I esteem you more than they do," the second being equivalent to "I esteem you more than I esteem them."

Beware of using such expressions as "It is *me*," "It is *him*," "Between you and *I*," "It cannot be *me* you mean" contracted from "It cannot be I whom you mean."

The indefinite use of "it," as an expression for a state of being or the subject of discourse, is, however, unobjectionable. Note, the verb must agree with the "it." "It *is* I," "It *is* they," not "It am I," "It are they." Hence we have "'Tis two or three, my lord." The most frequent abstract use of "it" appears in apposition to general phrases, as "*It is* impossible to say," and as representing natural processes, as "*It* rains," "*It* snows."

Note that the English form of expression corresponding to the Latin ablative and the Greek genitive absolute is in the nominative—"He made as wise proverbs as anyone has done since, *him* only excepted who, &c.," should be "*he* only excepted." Otherwise I

might say, "This happened, me being present." The accusative absolute found in Milton is obsolete.

But a whole clause thrown into the objective may be introduced by a relative in the nominative—"He went on speaking to *who would listen to him*": "who" is here elliptical for "those who."

III. **Wrong Numbers** are frequently met with when there are intervening or qualifying clauses and the nearest noun or group of nouns is mistaken for the nominative; *e. g.*—

"The quality of the apples *were* good."

"A plurality of subjects *require* a plural verb."

"The dropping of cumbrous words *are* a real gain."

"He was fonder of nothing than wit and raillery, but he is far from being happy in *it*."

The collective force of "and" or the disjunctive force of "or" is forgotten in the following:—

"Both minister and magistrate *is* compelled to choose between his duty and his profession."

"A feeble, harsh or obscure style *are* always faults."

"When the helplessness of childhood or the frailty of women *make* an appeal."

Sometimes, however, two subjects are so closely connected as to make a single notion. "Hill and dale *doth* boast thy blessing" is admissible. So in Shakespeare, "All *is* but toys: Renown and Grace *is* dead."

Similarly, it is hypercriticism to object to "Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory" where each in turn is regarded as the nominative. The full expression would be "Thine is the kingdom, thine is the power, thine is the glory."

Excepting in poetry "you" is used in English for "thou"; but it must be followed by the plural of the verb. It is wrong to say, "I am as well as when you *was* here."

As a rule the verb agrees with the subject, but it may agree with the predicate when the latter comes first in the sentence, as—

"The reward of the sovereign *is* the love and respect of his people."

The coupling of a singular and plural should, however, as much as possible be avoided. The following, for instance, are extremely awkward:—

"The only remaining circumstance *is the principles.*

"The only other part of speech which partakes of the weakness remarked in conjunctions *is prepositions.*"

Alter the construction, and read, "Among the other parts of speech prepositions alone partake, &c." Where different persons are associated by a disjunctive, the verb agrees with the last person. "He or you or I *am* expected."

Many **collective nouns**—as People, Clique, Ministry, Meeting, League—may be followed indifferently by either a singular or a plural verb. But it is absurd to vary the number of the verbs or pronouns agreeing with the same noun in the same sentence; *e. g.*—

"No *people* ever *was* more rudely assailed by the sword of conquest than *those* of this country; none had *its* chains, to appearance, more firmly rivetted round *their* necks."

"The mob *is* cruel and *they* are ignorant."

Note, that the title of a book is always a singular. "'The Annals of Florence' are a most imposing work" is wrong.

"Property" is singular; we cannot say "Property should be returned to their rightful owners." But "Wages" should be followed by the plural; "the men's wages are distributed every Saturday," is right.

Sometimes a nominative is singular merely in form, and having a distinctly plural meaning should be followed by a plural verb—

"The greater number of such periods is ungraceful and obscure." The "is" here should rather be "are."

On the other hand, a general term is erroneously separated into its component parts in the sentence—

"It gives pain to the mind and memory and exposes the unskilful *hearer* to mingle the particulars together. It leads *them* into a thick wood instead of into open daylight." The pronoun "them" grammatically refers to "particulars," which makes nonsense: it is meant to refer to *hearers*, but the antecedent is "hearer."

The Distributives **each, every, either, neither** are improperly followed by the plural of the verb; *e.g.*—

"I am not certain that *either* of us *were* there."

"How far *each* of the three epic poets *have* distinguished themselves."

"*Neither bear* any sign of case at all."

"Let *everyone* please *themselves*.

As well as, and **None** = No one, take the singular. It is wrong to say, "Homer as well as Virgil *were* studied;" "None *have* come."

And not, after a singular, takes a singular verb; *e.g.*—"My poverty, and not my will, *consents*.

Many a, properly takes the singular; *e.g.*—

"Full many a flower *is* born to blush unseen."

It is wrongly followed by the plural in the following couplet—

"And many a holy text around she strews
That *teach* the rustic moralist to die."

With, may be followed by either the singular or the plural.

"Prosperity with humility renders its possessor amiable," is right, "with humility" being regarded as a modification of "prosperity." But when two or more things act together the plural is correct—

"The king with the lords and commons form a good government."

IV. Wrong Mood and Tense. The most

frequent errors in English under this head may be avoided by attending to the following rules.

A. Be careful to distinguish between *the indefinite Past*, or Aorist, and *the Perfect*. Remember that the latter brings the close of the action down to the time of speaking; *e.g.*—

"I *ate* my breakfast at nine this morning, and now I *have* just *finished* my dinner."

The Perfect cannot therefore be properly applied to an event which is referred to as complete at a past date; *e.g.*—

"You may do what you *have done* a century ago," should be "*did*."

"Our club *has* commenced last Friday." Omit "*has*."

Similarly, the Pluperfect marks an event occurring at a definite time.

"He *had* lost his wife *while* he was governor of Gaul," should be "lost—while" or "had lost—when."

B. Observe the **Sequence of Tenses.**

(*a*) Generally a Past tense goes with a Past tense; a Present with a Present or a Future tense. The following false sequences will illustrate the rule.

"No writer *would* write a book unless he *thinks* it *will* be read."

This must be either "no writer *will* unless he *thinks* it *will*," &c., or, "no writer *would* unless he *thought* it *would*," &c.

"Before six months were past the paper *was known* in almost every village; while at the extremities of the country it *circulates* every morning."

The second statement should be made in a separate sentence.

"But the influences under which its institutions *were to have been* formed *will* no longer be exclusively Russian" should be "*are to be formed*."

"A week elapses ere the postman returns, and so *it will* happen that a mail steamer for Europe *shall*

have departed," read, "so it frequently happens that the steamer has departed."

(*b*) In vivid narrative, past scenes and events may be described as if they were actually before us, and we make use of the Present tense; *e.g.*—

"When the bark of Columbus *nears* the shore of America, *can* we separate the man from the living picture: *does* not the new world *clothe* his form with her palm groves and savannahs."

But we must preserve this **historical present** through the whole paragraph. A common error of young writers is incongruously shifting from present to past, and *vice versa; e.g.*—

"The dews *are* falling, it *is* growing chill, our excursion *was* over, we *turned* for home."

(*c*) In reporting a *speech directly*, that is in the words of the speaker, we use the Present tense in inverted commas.

"Lord B. said 'I cannot believe that the nation will consent to this.'"

In *indirect narration* the tense of a reported speech is dependant on that of the verb in the clause which introduces it. The Present or Future-Present follows the Present.

"What does he say? He says he cannot believe that the nation will ever consent."

The Past follows the Past.

"Lord B. said he could not believe that the nation ever would consent."

(*d*) The use of the **Infinitive** after a principal verb requires attention. It should be in the present when it expresses what is either future or contemporary at the time indicated by the principal verb, whether that verb be in the Present or the Past tense; *e.g.*—"I intend to write," "He intended to write," "He seems to be a literary man," "He appears to have studied," "He appeared to study," "He appeared to have studied," are all correct expressions. But "I found

him better than I expected *to have found* him" is wrong. It is as if one were to say "It is long since I commanded him *to have done it.*" Here we must read "*to find him*" and "*to do it.*"

The following illustrate the same error—

"I expected from the promises of the noble lord *to have seen* the bank paying in gold," should be "*to see.*"

"They, supposing him *to have been* in the company, went a day's journey," read, "supposing him *to be.*"

"Had this been the fate of Tasso, he would have been able to *have celebrated,*" should be "*to celebrate.*"

The same rule applies to the **Participle.**

"When I wrote that letter I *had* not the pleasure *of hearing* his sentiments," should be "*had* not the pleasure *of having heard,*" or, "*had not had* the pleasure of *hearing.*"

When there are two clauses, one subordinate to the other, we must carry our thoughts back to the time of the principal verb; and then consider what relation the time of the subordinate verb bears to it.

Observe that the "to" which usually precedes the infinitive is omitted after the auxiliary verbs and also after *bid*, *dare*, *feel*, *hear*, *let*, and *make;* but poetry sometimes assumes the license of introducing it.

"*Bid me to live* and I will live
Thy Protestant to be."

C. Error often arises from an elliptical expression after an auxiliary, *e.g.*—

"The following facts *may* or *have been* adduced as reasons." "May" has no concord with "have been," —so read "*may be or have been.*"

"The book *has*, *is*, or *shall be* published," should be "*has been*, *is being*, or *shall be* published."

"Religious principle is the only power that ever *has* or ever *will combat* these seductions," read "ever has combated," &c.

"Polygamy *never has* and *never can be* a vice of the great body of the people," read "never has been," &c.

D. The **Subjunctive Mood.** Some writers make a very sparing use of this mood. "If it is," "If it be," "If it rains," "If it rain," are employed almost indifferently. But the following rules may be laid down. Use the Indicative where there is no real uncertainty about the condition being fulfilled; *e. g.*—"If virtue *is* good." Use the Subjunctive where you disbelieve in the condition being realized or protest against its being accepted—"If virtue feeble *were*;" "If she *be* a traitor, why so am I." "If he *desert* his friends to save himself he is a coward."

The Subjunctive is properly used—

(*a*) In reference to future events about which there must be doubt.

"If thou *read* this, O Cæsar, thou may'st live."

(*b*) After "though" (which may also take the indicative)—"Though the world *frown* I care not."

(*c*) After "might," "would," "could," or "should." Do not say "Of his prose we might say much that *was* favourable," but "that were," or "that *would be* favourable."

V. **Miscellaneous.** Some common errors not reducible to a distinct head may be mentioned here.

1. An absurd but not unfrequent inaccuracy consists in changing the construction of a sentence or combining two constructions so as to leave both incomplete; *e. g.*—

"It is owing to this advice the plan is to be ascribed." Here it curiously results that by increasing the number of words we prevent either part of the sentence from being finished. The tautology of "owing," as it were, stops the way. The above should be either "The plan is to be ascribed to this advice," or "The plan is owing to this advice."

"As to how far Shakespeare believed this has been a matter of dispute," read "How far."

2. A like incongruity results from the use of "*and was*," "*and who*," "*and which*," "*such which*," where

the "and" and "such" are superfluous. "The Attorney-General, whose malignity induced him to be extremely violent, *and was* listened to by the judges." This is nonsense. If we say "and who was," we have a legitimate extension of the nominative, but no verb. Strike out the "and."

"Languages taught by the possessors are called the learned; *and which* appellation is at the same time intended," &c., read "and this," or "which."

"Refinement in writing expresses a less natural and less obvious train of thought, *and which* it required a peculiar line of genius to pursue," read "one which."

"**And which**" is always wrong unless another "which" has preceded. "Such which" should never be used; *e. g.*—

"We have brought you back peace; *such* a peace *which* I hope moreover will satisfy our sovereign." Strike out "such," or read "as" for "which" and omit "moreover."

3. Avoid the following improper collocations—

"*Them who*," "*they who*," "*such whose*," "*scarcely than*," "*so than*," "*superior than*," "*other but*," "*all seldom;*" *e.g.*—

"We should regard *them who* are wise and good."

Or in the following otherwise awkward expression—

"Those paragraphs exhibit a style which *they who* can imitate should esteem themselves happy." Supply "persons," which is understood, and it becomes evident we should say "*those who.*"

"They should never be ventured on except by *such whose* reputation gives them some degree of dictatorial power," read "*those authors whose.*"

"We feel a *superior* satisfaction in surveying the life of animals *than* that of vegetables," read "In surveying, &c., we feel a satisfaction *superior to* that we feel in the case of vegetables."

"*All* discourse addressed to the understanding *seldom* permits much inversion," omit "all."

4. Be careful in using "**That,**" and rarely use "**But that.**"

The various meanings of "that" appear in the following sentence:—

"I said that[1] that[2] that[3] that[4] you used was superfluous."

[1] Conjunction, [2] Demonstrative, [3] Noun, [4] Relative.

Let it everywhere appear in which sense you employ it, and avoid a jingle like the above.

"That" as a relative is distinguished from "which" mainly in these respects:—

(*a*) It cannot stand for a clause or a sentence.

(*b*) It may be used in reference to either persons or things.

(*c*) It cannot take a preposition before it. We may say "This is the assertion *to which* I object"; but we must say "*that* I object *to*."

(*d*) It is in closer connection with the immediately preceding noun. The difference has been well illustrated by comparing "There was a public-house next door *which* was a great nuisance" with "There was a public-house next door *that* was," &c. The former expression means that the fact of its being next door, the latter that the house itself was a nuisance.

"That" is frequently used instead of "who" or "which" for variety. It is gracefully employed in personifications or other metaphors where neither equivalent would be so appropriate; *e.g.*—

"The bird is dead
That we have made so much on."

When it refers to an object "that" may be omitted—"The man you speak of," for "the man *that* you speak of," but not when it is employed to mark a phrase as a nominative. I cannot say, "I have lived is enough," but must say, "*that* I have lived is enough."

"That" should not be introduced:—

(*a*) Immediately after a proper name.

"He fell on his knees to the Earl of Arundel *that* arrested him" is wrong, unless it means (which here it cannot) that there were several Earls of Arundel, and that one arrested him.

(*b*) In the same sentence with "who," referring to the same person; *e.g.*—

"Douglas, *who* had prepared his people, and *that* was bent on taking his part openly." The two relatives here are inconsistent and confusing.

"**But that**" is used wrongly in two senses; *e.g.*—

(*a*) "No one *will affirm but that*" for "No one will deny." Here the construction is weak and confusing.

(*b*) "A man *never doubts but that* he knows the intention of these words," when the meaning is "he never doubts *that*." Here the construction is flagrantly false, the grammar giving a sense the very opposite of what is intended. Omit the "but," as in "I doubt not but that he will come," equivalent to "He will come, I doubt not that."

5. **Double Negative.** Remember that, in standard modern English, two negatives amount to an affirmative. The Greek and Latin idiom by which they strengthen a negation occurs with us only in provincialisms. The Shakespearean license, "Be not too tame neither," is obsolete. Such expressions as "Neither Richard nor Peter never gave James authority," "Do not give him none of your money," "It won't rain, I don't think," are ungrammatical.

Other wrong uses of pronouns and particles fall to be considered under the head of Ambiguity.

CHAPTER II.

PURITY IN THE USE OF WORDS.

THE words used in good English composition must be classic English words. Every violation of this rule is a **Barbarism.** The most frequent sources of Barbarism are—

1. The use of obsolete words.
2. The use of provincial or slang words or expressions.
3. The general use of technical terms.
4. An affectation of foreign phraseology.
5. Coining words unnecessarily.

I. It is sometimes difficult to say when a word has become **Obsolete:** for words are sometimes unexpectedly recalled when they are on the verge of banishment. But we may lay it down as a rule not to use any word that is unintelligible or ambiguous to the majority of readers, or that conveys the impression of pedantic antiquarianism. Under this condemnation the following among others seem to fall—Hight, Whilom, Inly, Behest, Erst, Peradventure, Circumstantiate, Intitulate, Belikely, Whenas, Intendment, Cleped or Yclept, Oratorial; even such as—Beholden, Erewhile, Vouchsafe, Phantasy, Poesy, with such phrases as—Repent him of, I had as lief, It irks me, Methinks, It grieveth me, His speech bewrayeth him.

Under the same head comes the use of words in old and generally forgotten senses, as—"*Prevented* by an excellent writer," for *anticipated;* "*Obnoxious* to fluctuations," for *exposed;* "The *capital* members of a sentence," for the *leading* or *chief* members; "*Allegation*," for *title;* "*Anatomy*," for *analysis;* "*Numerous writing*," for verse; "*The Lyric*," for a lyric poet; &c.

Some of these, with other expressions generally discontinued, are still admissible in poetry. This applies also to the termination *en*, as "oaken," "strawen." *Ed*, and *eth*, now rarely found in English prose, are preserved, and often with good effect, in verse—

> "He prayeth best who loveth best
> All things both great and small."

II. **Provincial or even Slang Words and Phrases** are sometimes tolerable in conversation,

where the least objectionable are a useful check on formality. When employed dramatically they may be specially appropriate, as in the Irish and Welsh of Shakespeare, the Scotch of Scott, and the cockney dialect of Dickens. The natural language of a writer is always the best—*e. g.*, the Scotch dialect of Burns. But the forced assumption of a dialect is an affectation to be carefully avoided.

Slang terms must be used in writing, if at all, with great discretion; they should rarely find a place in serious compositions. Americanisms, as "Britisher," "Skedaddle," and the peculiar use of "Clever," "Calculate," "Guess," "Reckon," &c., with the mongrel speech adopted by some humorists, are only admissible in satirical pictures of American manners.

Of common English vulgarisms to be carefully avoided the following examples will suffice:—Bosh, Rot, Jolly, Governor, Peckish, Shop, Dodge, Sham, Screwed, A tip, Awfully nice, Contrariwise, Transmogrify, Pell-mell, Topsy-turvey, The *vend* of commodities, Offered at a *low figure*, The statement was *discounted*, See *with half an eye*, Smell a rat, Up to snuff, Cast in his teeth, Turn an honest penny, He was sat upon, Not to put too fine a point upon it, Events were on the wing, He slipped through his fingers, Not half bad, Do the agreeable, or the impossible, or the handsome thing, I am *that tired*, Currying favour, Dancing attendance; The horse may not have been *meant*, he won by a *fluke;* He don't seem to *see* it. Shun ungainly contractions, as—"On't" for on it or of it, You *take* me, They fell out, Exam., An Exhibit, Incog., Hyper, Hipped, &c. Threadbare quotations, as "own the soft impeachment," may be so debased as to fall under this head.

Some slang phrases are objectionable because they make nonsense when they are analysed. Such are—"He sings a good song and plays a good fiddle," "He grows into good language," "He holds in one

mind," "He acts out of filthy lucre," "They stand upon security," "Having a month's mind," "They differ among one another," "I had like to have gotten one or two broken heads," "There were three daughters every one prettier than another," "When I fall into his conversation."

A license is, however, allowed to poetry in such phrases as

"The fairest of her daughters Eve."

III. **Technical Terms,** however aptly applied in special departments of thought and to special things, are in danger of appearing vulgar or *pedantic* when extended, with a meaning that does not properly belong to them, to the affairs of common life. Such are several terms—

(*a*) Of Physical Science, as—Ventilate, Potential, Dynamic, Quantitative, Qualitative, Ratios, Quadrate, Positive and negative poles, Monad, Gaseity. Wire and Cable as verbs, Solvability of debtors, &c.

(*b*) Of Mental Science, as—Dialectic, Transcendental, Apperception, Observational, Actuality, Objective and subjective, Connotation and Denotation.

(*c*) Of Law, as—Probation, Precognition, Remembrancer, Prejudicate, Anent.

(*d*) Of Art, as—Architypal, Chromatic, Chiaroscuro. Technic.

(*e*) Of Business, as—Bulling, Bearing, Rise in pigs, Bring to book, &c.

Also, military, nautical, college, or sporting terms in ordinary discourse; as—All hands, Fore and aft, Bear away, Spring a leak, "Burns *of curs*," "Scenting a trap," Ploughed, Plucked, Scratched, &c.

IV. **Foreign Words and Phrases,** though vindicating their introduction when they fill a gap in the language and supply us with new terms for new foreign things, are apt to be used in place of equally expressive English terms. Among intruders in this

way we may instance—Délicatesse, Politesse, Café, Fraicheur, Sortie, Fracas, Emeute, Volupté, Opiniâtre, Malgré, Confrères, Vraisemblance, Toute-ensemble, Hauteur, Eclaircissement, Connaisseur, Amour-propre, Fait accompli, Raison d'être, Dernier-ressort, Beaux Arts, Belles Lettres, Motif, Portemonnaie, Cortège.

Some of these are occasionally useful, but they are of too frequent occurrence in such affected phrases as "The *tournure* of his ideas." "These matters are *on the tapis*." "Gave him his *congé*," &c.

Similarly, the Latin *opusculum* is substituted for a pamphlet, "The *sic volumus*" for the mandate, &c., or the German *gemüth* for mind, *geist* for spirit, *kunst* for art, *verstimmt* for out of humour, *heimweh* for home-sickness. Coleridge and others are wont to use Germanisms, as *Vernunft* and *Verstand*, to veil a confusion of thought. They think that certain distinctions cannot be expressed in English: being imaginary, they cannot be expressed at all.

Considerable indulgence is granted to novelists and writers of books on foreign travel in the employment of these and other words, and fashion may rule that they be generally adopted; but they should be closely examined on passing the custom-house.

V. **Coining Words** contrary to analogy or without sufficient reason is a vicious kind of forgery. With new thoughts new forms will force their way into a language, but it should be a rule never to make a word when others ready made can be found to serve the purpose. A young writer should never invent a word at all, nor use any of the following which have been, for the most part of late years, foisted upon our tongue—

Concept, Obversely, Scientist, Philologer, Etymon, Stoicheiology, Concatenate, Conserve, Disemasculate, Noetic, Fictional, Percute, Skeletonize, Martyrize, Safeguarded, Apotheosed, Peripatetician, Platonician, Undevelopment, Incumberment, Protended, Donate,

Unsuccessfulness, Recuperation, Vastitudes, Penology, Adorement, Circumvolvings, Unanalogical, Difficultly, Disgustful, Peccant.

Shun the temptation of making *new compounds*, as —Architect-capacity, Mirror-writing, World-system, Self-practice, Age-distant.

Especially *beware of using nouns for adjectives*, as in the above, and hybrids like "Knowledge-qualification."

Equally avoid the affectation of using adjectives or adverbs as nouns; *e.g.*—"We have to do with these influences not *in the actual* but as expressed in language." "*The Real and the Beautiful* met together and the result was my novel." "We knew *the when* but we knew not *the where*."

The bulk of these sham creations are due to a Classical pedantry beginning to go out of fashion.

The more recent Anglo-Saxon or Old English pedantry, which attempts to expel long established Latin words to make room for Teutonic ghosts, is no better. It results in such barbarisms as—"Fore-words," for Preface; "A try," for an attempt; "Name-word," for noun; "For-name," for pronoun; "Link-word," for conjunction; "But-word," for adversative; "The anonymous *Remarker;*" "In sweet and *matterful* verse have they sung their praises;" Regrettable, Usable, Doable, Unwisdom; "The *Un-go-through-some-ness* of stuff," for "the Impenetrability of matter."

CHAPTER III.

PROPRIETY IN THE USE OF WORDS.

PERFECTLY good English words may be misused by being employed so as to convey either no sense or a wrong sense. They are wrong words because they are in the wrong places. In good writing every word and phrase must be made to bear the sense properly belonging to it, that is, the sense which etymology or

established usage has assigned. When this rule is violated an impropriety occurs. The main sources of impropriety in English are :—

1. **Neglect of the proper sequence of Particles.** Nothing but study of the best writers and practice in composition will enable us to decide what are the prepositions and conjunctions that ought to go with certain verbs. The following illustrate some common blunders :—

"It was characterized *with* eloquence," read "by."

"A testimonial *of* the merits of his grammar," read "to."

"It was an example of the love *to form* comparisons," read "of forming."

"Repetition is always to be preferred *before* obscurity," read "to."

"He made an effort *for meeting* them," read "to meet."

"They have no *other* object *but* to come," read "other than," or omit "other."

"Some anomalies have never been *excepted against* by any writer," read "taken exception to."

Two verbs are not unfrequently followed by a single preposition, which accords with one only, *e.g.*—"This duty *is repeated* and inculcated *upon* the reader." "Repeat *upon*" is nonsense; we must read "is repeated *to* and inculcated upon."

2. **Want of discrimination between Synonyms.** The number of real synonyms, or words having precisely the same signification, is in any language very limited. In general the terms so called merely approximate without coinciding: there are shades of difference between them. The exactitude of an author's style is greatly determined by his appreciation of those differences; by his making use of the precise word which in the circumstances is the fittest, *i.e.*, which will best express his thought.

Gross instances of impropriety, as "*Herculanean*

labours," for "Herculean," "The *Anatomy* of Bulgaria," for "Autonomy," "That subject should be *tattooed*," for "tabooed," result from confusion of sound, or from confusion of quite different senses, as "Harvey *invented* the circulation of the blood, Galileo *discovered* the telescope." These and the like are too glaring to be frequent; but there are few writers who do not occasionally err in their selection from pairs of terms more closely related. Such are:—Abstain and Forbear; Consent and Comply; Hereafter and Henceforth; Apparent and Manifest; Weary and Fatigue; Difficulty and Obstacle; Avow and Confess; Construe and Construct; &c.

Warnings like the following may be indefinitely multiplied from the works even of justly celebrated authors:—

"Some pains were thrown away in attempting to *retrieve* the names of those to whom he alludes," read "recall."

"I *doubt* that his partiality has carried him too far," read "fear."

"Warburton's *infidelity* was greatly suspected," read "fidelity," or "he was suspected of infidelity."

"In this passage he might find matter even to prompt *risibility*," read "laughter."

"Among all the animals upon *which* nature has impressed deformity and *horror*, there was none *whom* he durst not encounter rather than a beetle"; read, "Among all the animals on which nature has impressed a repulsive stamp, he most feared to encounter a beetle."

"The most *ancient* treatise by a modern on this subject was by a French physician," read "oldest."

"His political existence was *wound up* with the success of Russia," read "bound up."

"He had lent to different people a *quantity* of books," read "a number."

"No man ever had *less* friends or more enemies," read "fewer."

"I *acquiesce* with you that his character is *undeniable*," read "agree," "unimpeachable."

"This transaction seems to have excited the greatest *portion* of rancour," read "amount."

Note that terms applying properly to physical things are often, as in the above, transferred improperly to mental states. There is a growing tendency to use the words "*small*" or "*little*" for "trifling" or "slight," *e.g.*—"a *small* alteration in the arrangement," "a *small* quarrel," "a *little* absurdity;" similarly, "*large*" for "great" in such phrases as "a *large* amount of opposition," &c.—a use which is, to say the least, extremely awkward.

But impropriety most frequently results from the writer not appreciating the relation of two nouns, or two verbs, or an adjective and noun, or a noun and verb to each other; *e.g.*—"Upon the style it is that these *perplexities* depend for their *illumination*"; we *disentangle* "perplexities."

"This was the *unanimous deliberation* of the Court"; unanimous applies to an opinion or determination, not to the process by which it is reached; the noun should be "finding," or "conclusion."

"His Lordship did not think it possible that any *question* of foreign policy could have been more successfully *opposed*," read "question discussed," or "movement" or "resolution opposed."

"The *avenue* to writing *passed through* recitation," read "avenue was through," or "men passed to writing through recitation."

"The cavalry were *extenuated* by the fatigues of the voyage," read "attenuated."

"Pope *glorified* in being not the follower but the friend of princes," read "gloried."

"The bestowing sensibility upon things inanimate requires very peculiar circumstances for *operating* the delusion," read "maintaining" or "bringing about."

"Hume's history will be *coeval* with the thread of English story," read "co-extensive."

A passive is sometimes improperly used for an active, or an active for a passive form—

"The remaining violations of purity are not difficult *to be avoided*," read "to avoid," or better, "are more easily avoided."

"While these violences *were carrying on*, Clarendon came over," read "acts of violence were taking place."

A frequent confusion arises from associating one verb with two nouns, to one of which it is not properly applicable, in the predicate. Thus—

"Of the nineteen tyrants who started up under the reign of Gallienus there was not one who *enjoyed* a life of peace or a *natural death*," read "had" for "enjoyed," or insert "died" before "a natural death." The rule, in such cases, is either to select a verb proper to both nouns, or to make use of two verbs.

3. **Carelessness as to the meaning of a Sentence.** Impropriety of phrase appears in such expressions as make nonsense when they are analysed. The following exhibit either confusion of ideas or want of attention to the force of words. Similar examples in abundance may be every morning selected from the newspaper press.

"One man was so injured that his *death* was despaired of," read "life."

"The first project was to shorten discourse by *cutting polysyllables into one*," the meaning is, probably, "by breaking up polysyllables into monosyllables."

"Monarchy *stood prostrate* at the foot of the Church," read "was," or "fell."

"Father Mathew in Ireland effected the *reform of Temperance*," *i.e.*, "of Intemperance."

"I have not *wilfully* committed the least mistake." A mistake cannot be wilful; read "as far as I know."

"The increase of those *horned cattle* is the most extraordinary instance of multiplication *in the annals of mankind*." It is safer to say "that we have on record."

Be careful to avoid contradicting yourself within the limits of the same page.

"*Unseen* powers, like the deities of Homer, were *seen* to mingle at every step with the tide of sublunary affairs." The sentence is in several respects objectionable, the main assertion is hardly credible.

"Sweyn, king of Denmark, and Olave, king of Norway, invaded England, and *spreading themselves in bodies* over the kingdom committed many and cruel depredations." Read, "spreading their armies, or their followers."

"Richelieu's portrait was encircled by a *crown of forty rays, in each of which was the name of the celebrated forty academicians.*" Read, "the name of one of."

"If we would see what the *aborigines* of this country originally were, what but for foreign intermixture *they would still have been*, we have only to look to the inhabitants of the south and west of Ireland." As the aborigines belong to a remote past, we must read, "their descendants would still have been."

It is worth noting that such absurdities often result from over-condensation, as in the advertisement, "Lost, A large Spanish blue gentleman's cloak." Read, "A large blue Spanish cloak, belonging to a gentleman."

Before writing think carefully what you mean to say, then say it, no less and no more.

PART III.

RULES RELATING TO CLEARNESS.

AFTER Purity the main requisite of style is **Perspicuity.**

A good writer ought not only to write so as to convey some sense to his readers, but so as to convey in the clearest manner the exact sense of his thought. We should not be left to grope for the meaning among a maze of words, nor be left in doubt between two meanings. Quintilian says, "Care should be taken, not that the reader may understand if he will, but that he must understand whether he will or not."

CHAPTER I.

SIMPLICITY.

ONE important element of Clearness is Simplicity. A difficult subject cannot be made easy by simple words, but we ought to try to express ourselves in the plainest idiomatic English that will fully represent our ideas.

I. Constant *confusion* arises *from the use of long words* where there are others more familiar to serve our purpose. With few exceptions, such attempts at fine language as the following should be avoided—

"The night, now far advanced, was brilliantly bright with the radiance of astral and lunar effulgence;" *i.e.*, "The night was far advanced, and the moon and stars were shining brightly."

"The letter is the fulmination of a man of profound convictions. It may not be accurate in its collocation of events, but it is the outpouring of an earnest soul;" read, "It is the letter of a man of strong convictions;

and though perhaps inaccurate in most of its details, it commands respect by the evident sincerity of its purpose."

Similarly, shun such periphrases as—"the tender chords" or "the amorous affection," for love; "minatory expressions," for threats; "the succulent bivalve," for an oyster; "an eminent agriculturist," for a good farmer; "inebriates" or "dipsomaniacs," for drunkards; "Daimonic influence," for inspiration; "ruminant's beatitude," for cow's pleasure; "pharmaceutical chemist," for apothecary.

So, prefer Abuse to Vituperation; Welcome or Reception to Ovation; Begin or Commence to Inaugurate or Initiate; Enrage to Exacerbate; Neighbourhood to Vicinity; Gospel to Evangel; "the patterns of things in the heavens," to "the exemplars of the celestials"; "he died poor," to "he expired in indigent circumstances."

II. In ordinary prose, *give persons and things their plain names.* Do not allude to them, as is often done from a misplaced love of variety, indirectly, *i. e.*, by reference to some more or less remotely associated circumstances; *e. g.*—Do not refer to the Deity as "the Occupant of the throne of Heaven," nor to Homer as "the blind old bard" or "the grand poetic sire," nor to Aristotle as "the Stagirite" or "the Master Critic," nor to Dante as "the distinguished Florentine," nor to Milton as "the great Epic Iconoclast," nor to Shakespeare as "the Swan of Avon" or "Gentle Will," nor to Dr. Johnson as "the great lexicographer," nor to a man's head as "his more dignified extremity," nor to the sun as "the glorious lamp of day," nor to the Latin language as "the lady of the even trench and bristling mound."

Note. An exception to this rule occurs when the action referred to has a close relation to the attribute named; *e.g.*—"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" "The victors of Sedan saw nothing between them and the capture of Paris."

The Pedantry of frequent quotations and remote allusions is a like source of obscurity; *e.g.*—

"They partook of the cup that cheers but not inebriates," for "They took tea together."

"Who while *circum præcordia ludit* giveth us to feel," for "while by his genial humour he makes us feel."

"Perhaps more *bruta fulmina* have come from Exeter Hall," read, "more loud nonsense has."

"We should think *the Gladstonian* thrice before we decide." Omit the adjective.

"He failed in one trade and tried another, but his receipts were '*few and far between*,' and his '*last state was worse than his first.*'" Read, "He failed in one trade, tried another, and failed again."

The following is a salient example of allusive pedantry—

"There are torches of Miltiades in every battle-field of academic or national struggles, of which the sight or remembrance ought forever to prevent the young Themistocles from sleeping." This probably means, "In every academic or national competition there are examples of well earned success which ought to inspire us with a desire to emulate them."

Say what you have to say so as to instruct or persuade your hearer. An effort to show off learning often results in an exposure of ignorance.

III. Simple things and incidents should always be described in simple terms. The following evidence is somewhat puzzling to most readers—

"I found on examination a contusion of the integuments under the orbit, with extravasation of blood and ecchymosis of the surrounding cellular tissue, which was in a tumefied state, with abrasion of cuticle." The plain English of this is that the medical reporter found a patient with a black eye.

The same sort of stilted language is too often found in metaphysical treatises and works on Art-criticism.

One argument in favour of the use of simple words, is that they come to our minds most naturally; the

so-called literary diction is often a bad afterthought. Macaulay has directed attention to the good strong English of Dr. Johnson's unpremeditated remarks—"The Rehearsal has not wit enough to keep it sweet;" "that is," he continued by way of correcting, but really spoiling the sentence, "it has not vitality enough to preserve it from putrefaction." "When we were taken up-stairs," he says in a letter from the Hebrides, "a dirty fellow bounced out of the bed on which one of us was to lie." The incident reappears in the Journal in this pompous and inverted form—"Out of one of the couches on which we were to repose there started up at our entrance a man black as a Cyclops from the forge."

The almost exclusive use of native does not, like the extreme use of Latin words, savour of absurdity, but it too is a fault of style. If plain words are best for plain things, technical subjects are appropriately discussed in technical terms. These recall nothing but the thing designated, being unconnected with other associations, associations which, when we use common words in scientific senses, seldom fail to perplex and mislead us. To talk of a daisy or a wall-flower by its botanical name in ordinary discourse would be to make ourselves obscure to our hearers. We should call a spade a spade, a thief a thief not a kleptomaniac; but Geography is better than Earth-description; Longitude than Length; Anatomy than Cutting up. Magnitude is something different from Greatness; Fluidity is not Wateriness; and to drop the distinction would be, by an affectation of simplicity, to fall into obscurity on the other side.

CHAPTER II.

BREVITY.

WITH some exceptions, the more briefly a thought is expressed the more clearly is it conveyed. Every word in a sentence which does not do good does

harm. It is therefore a rule in Composition never to use a superfluous phrase. If on revision you find a word that you cannot account for and defend, strike it out. There are three main forms of Redundancy—

I. **Tautology**, or saying the same thing twice when we have nothing to gain by it.

Tautology sometimes appears in the useless repetition of a word—"On *comparing* those works together, I found there was no *comparison* between them."

But much more frequently the same idea is repeated in different words; as—"Less capacity is *required* for this business, but more time is *necessary*."

Under this head, be careful to avoid using—

(*a*) *Superfluous Particles*, especially Prepositions and Conjunctions. Those italicised in the following may be omitted without injury to the sense—

"He would have recoiled aghast from *before* the idea."

"*Down* until this time." "Hitherto and *before now*."

"They may be divided *up* into their component parts."

"Persons who settle *upon* what shall be the topics of their speeches."

"As they must pass their lives together, I have *therefore* thought."

"Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat *of it*."

"He restored the chief butler to his butlership *again*."

(*b*) *Adverbs*, *Adjectives*, *or qualifying phrases*, the meanings of which are already involved in the sentence—

"The *most* entire satisfaction," "The *progress* of advancement," "The *whole* sum total," "The *entire* monopoly of the *whole* trade." "*One* unanimous cry." "These departments *mutually* reflect light on each other." "They returned *back again* to the *same* city *from* whence they came *forth*." "The universal opinion *of all men*." "Many offered *voluntarily* to be

among the number." "The proper ornaments of style arise from sentiment: they flow *in the same stream* with the current of thought."

"The second mode is by studying the literature of a language in order of time, *or chronologically* beginning with the *very* oldest *written* books, and coming down to the latest *and newest.*"

Especially avoid such couplets as "sylvan forest," "umbrageous shade," "unfounded calumny," "first aggressor," "first rudiments," &c.; also the use of single attributes which are themselves tautologies, as—"most highest," "worser," "lesser," "chiefest," "extremest."

(*c*) *Two or more Nouns* meaning nearly the same thing, as "currency and circulation," "investigation and enquiry," "institutions and government," "welfare and prosperity," "intents and purposes," "bounds and limits," "pleasure and satisfaction," "courage and resolution."

Note that in some cases such collocations are allowable with the view to unfold what is involved, or to distinguish between two possible meanings of one word, as when we say "sense and construction," in contradistinction to "sense and sensibility." Some pairs seem linked like Siamese twins, by established usage; such are "use and wont," "means and substance," "subject-matter," "head and front of offending," "vision and faculty divine." But it is undesirable to multiply those practical duplicates, as they are apt to confuse the reader by suggesting a difference where none exists.

Observe, however, that the repetition of a word is frequently to be recommended for the sake of clearness, and that the repetition of an idea is often an element of oratorical effect; *e. g.*—

"All that is little and low and mean among us."

II. **Pleonasm** does not, like tautology, exactly repeat the sense of the writer; but it adds to it nothing

of any consequence—nothing that is not really involved in what has been said before. It is a more deceptive and equally offensive redundancy. The following are pleonasms :—

"He went home full of *a great many* serious reflections."

"I shall come to see you *at your house* to-morrow, if I have any leisure *on my hands*."

"Reason is the glory of human nature, and is one of the chief eminences whereby we are raised above our fellow-creatures the brutes *in this lower world*."

"This club treats all other clubs with *an eye of* contempt."

"He managed the affairs of the country with prudent policy and *provident* wisdom."

"In the Attic commonwealth it was the privilege *and birthright* of every citizen *and poet* to rail aloud *and in public*."

"Both of *them*," "All of *them*," and such terms as "Self-same," "Four square," "Oftentimes," are pleonastic.

These and similar expansions are, however, not unfrequently justifiable on the ground of rhetorical emphasis; *e.g.*, "The heavens *above*, the earth *beneath*, and the waters *under the earth*;" "We have seen *with our eyes*, and heard *with our ears*."

Pleonasms may always be remedied by striking out the superfluous words.

III. **Verbosity.**—Here the case is different; for a verbose, or long-winded sentence, is based on circumlocution, and to mend it we must recast it. A simple instance is, "On receiving this information he arose, went out, saddled his horse, and went to town." The details do not repeat each other, but they are utterly insignificant and uninteresting: it would be enough to say, "On receiving this information he rode to town." Extended instances of verbosity generally illustrate other errors; but the extreme

uncouthness of the following is mainly due to the twadding details it introduces :—

"Besides which, I remember well seeing a magnificent drawing, of the largest size, called 'Italy,' belonging to Mr. Fowler, and another grand one of the 'Falls of the Clyde,' with others of which Mr. Ruskin has not a word to say in his bulky catalogue of 150 pages, which, notwithstanding that half of it is spent upon his own drawings, is really very interesting reading at any other time and at any other place."

For more humorous examples of the garrulous style, turn to the speeches of Dame Quickly and of Polonius in Shakespeare.

Very **long sentences**, even when not tautological, are often difficult to follow. The awkwardness of the following sentences is owing to various causes—as a redundancy of adjectives, the intrusion of sentiment, accumulation of particles, &c., but their obscurity is due in great measure to lumbering length.

"Finally, Mill, the youngest of the three—he was but twenty-nine when he wrote the passage which I have quoted—had for several years been writing in the Westminster and other Reviews articles from which it was to be inferred that when his courageous and truth-loving father, and that father's friend, Bentham, should be gone from the earth they would leave behind them, in this heir of their hopes, one fit to be an expositor of their ideas through another generation, but who was likely rather to look right and left in that generation for himself and to honour his descent, not by mere adhesion to what he had inherited, but by an open-mindedness that should even solicit contrary impressions and push on passionately at every break of day in the quest of richer truth." . . . "Whatever other men, seniors or coevals of these three, may be named as having co-operated with them, either as urging views of their own or as continuing the older philosophic influences, certain it is that it is to Carlyle, Hamilton, and Mill that all would point as having been the most prominent leaders of free or uncovenanted British speculation during the last thirty years."

The matter of the above might at least be more clearly conveyed in some such manner as the following :—

"Mill, the youngest of the group, though but twenty-nine when he wrote the passage quoted above, had for several years

been known as a leading writer in the Westminster and other Reviews. From the tone and quality of his articles it might already have been predicted that the ideas of his father and of Bentham, his father's friend, were likely to be expounded to the next generation in a manner worthy of the bold thinkers who had put them forth. His readers felt that J. S. Mill was sure to honour his descent by no blind adhesion to inherited belief, but by a keen regard to the circumstances of his time, a mind ever open to receive various impressions, and a zeal ever on the alert for the pursuit of truth. Others, the seniors or contemporaries of those three, may be named as their fellow-workers, either in the advocacy of new views or the transmission of older philosophic influences; but Carlyle, Hamilton, and Mill are universally admitted to have been, during the last thirty years, the most prominent leaders of independent British speculation."

Long sentences have their proper place as elements of variety in an extended composition; but they require skill in handling, and it is rarely prudent for a young writer to attempt the construction of one which requires him to pause for breath in the course of reading it.

Never introduce any circumstances in a sentence save those which obviously bear on the main statement. There is no need to say, "I wrote *a letter* to her," for if I wrote it must have been a letter. But it is correct to say, "I wrote a long letter," which escapes the ambiguity involved in the phrase, "I wrote to her at length."

It is also a rule, in ordinary prose, to make a statement as directly as possible. The verbiage of fine language tends to verbosity. Avoid also all **Roundabout modes of expression.** Among these are—

(*a*) *Needless asseverations or references to your own opinion.* Be cautious in using such expressions as, "I am sure," "It is certain," "Having bestowed great pains in investigating the subject, I am firmly persuaded that," "I am convinced it is true that." Equally avoid:—"As I think," "It seems to me," "As far as I know," &c. For of course your assertion will only be received for what it is worth. The following, from Sir Philip Sidney, could only be justified in conversation:—

"I think (and I think I think rightly) the laurel crown doth worthily honour the poet's triumph."

As a rule, the obtrusion of your own personality at all is pleonastic and in bad taste. Note that little is gained by the substitution of "we" for "I." Construct the sentence if possible so as to avoid either. Never say "we" when you are speaking of something that only concerns yourself; *e.g.*, "*We* went into the class-room at the last moment" is an affectation.

(*b*) *Needless Caveats or Double Negatives and Indirect Expressions.* The frequent employment of "but," "though," "however," "still," "nevertheless," "if I may say so," "so to speak," &c., especially when one caution is thrown on the top of another, the second restricting the first, the third the second, and so forth, is a mark of indecision of character, which muddles the sentence and puzzles the reader.

The *Double Negative* is properly used when a direct affirmative would overstate the truth. "He is *not unjust*," though he is hardly an Aristides; "It was *not a bad* hit"—rather good, but not the best.

It is employed with effect by eminent writers, to convey a strong assertion with some reserve, as in the famous peroration of Macaulay, when he says that Milton in his blindness "meditated a song so sublime and holy that it would *not* have *misbecome* the lips of those Ethereal Virtues whom," &c. But in common use this form is a mere weakness; *e.g.*—

"The following expressions seem *not* to have the merit of *not* being synonymous;" *i.e.*, they are practically synonymous.

"Henceforth all orders *not* emanating from the ministry must *not* be obeyed;" *i.e.*, "No orders save those emanating from the ministry are to be obeyed."

"It is *not* to be denied that a high degree of beauty does *not* lie in simple forms;" *i.e.*, We cannot expect a high degree of beauty in simple forms.

"All the creeds of Christendom teach the subjugation of the passions, and *do not give any* encourage-

ment to crimes against society"—Surely they *discourage* or *condemn* crimes against society.

"*Few* persons who had allowed their respect for facts to get the better of any prejudices they may have had for this or the other side, *believed that* in a fair fight *the Russians would be unable* to subdue the Turks in the long run." This is in many respects a bad sentence. Read—

"Few who had regard to the facts of history rather than their leaning to either side, doubted that the Russians would in the open field ultimately overcome the Turks."

"*None* of the little states that hoped to fatten on the carcass of Turkey *have been sent empty away.*" Read—"Every little state, &c., has had a slice."

Notice that Brevity is often promoted by substituting single adverbs for qualifying clauses—as "instantly" for "without losing a single moment,"—and sometimes by compounding words; *e.g.*, "The Yorkshiremen flew to arms" is shorter than "the men of the shire of York."

Cobbett's assertion, "He who writes badly thinks badly," receives constant illustration from the style of prolix writers: they are generally weak men. The qualities of directness and force, and consequently clearness of style, are undoubtedly due in some degree to natural gifts. But in so far as Education and Example have any effect on Style at all, it is useful to dwell on the paramount importance of those qualities.

Excessive Brevity may lead to a violation of Perspicuity. This is the more common error of great writers, who are apt to forget that the reader has not been admitted to their secrets, and that he cannot be expected to supply the latent trains of thought that link their sentences. Dr. Blair asserts that obscurity of style necessarily springs from indistinctness of conception; but, though generally, this is not always the case. It has been truly remarked that a practised thinker but unpractised writer is liable to be misled

by his own knowledge of his own meaning into supposing those expressions intelligible which are so to himself.

The Obscurity of the condensed style is generally due to an abuse of **Ellipses.** Observe that connecting particles or pronouns may often be omitted, not only without injury but with advantage to Clearness; *e.g.*, "Man proposes; God disposes." "I told you I would go myself." "Had I known the danger, I would not have gone." "Forgive us our debts." "There is no man that fears you less than he." Exclamations or commands, as, "A horse, a horse!" "Begone!" are clear contractions for "Bring me a horse," "I bid you go." "Had I but served my God with half the zeal I served my king" is unambiguous, though "with which" has to be understood after "zeal."

On the other hand, the following contractions are excessive:—

"He told me he had given John the gun the gunsmith brought him." Supply "which."

"The wise man is happy when he gains his own approbation, the fool other people's." Say, "The fool when he commends himself to others."

"He doth not only pass the Historian, but, for instructing, is well nigh comparable to the Philosopher, for moving leaveth him behind him."

"They declared it treason to attempt or imagine or speak evil of the King, Queen, or his heirs." The sense requires "his or her heirs."

"You ought to condemn all the wit in the world against you;" better, "though it be against you."

"It may be doubted whether Oxford ever propounded so wise a scheme of reform as this of Cambridge," ought to be "as this put forward by Cambridge."

"My Christian and surname begin and end with the same letter." Query, Is my name Charles Cairns or Bob Stubbs or Roger Rover? The statement requires expansion.

"Dr. Marsh, himself and several members of his family well-known advocates of evangelical religion, died on the 24th of August."

Read, "Dr. Marsh, a member of a family well known for the advocacy of evangelical religion, died," &c.; or "Dr. Marsh died, &c. He and several members of his family were," &c.

Obscurity in commonplace matter and in sentences expressing commonplace thought is more apt to result from diffuseness than from brevity.

In difficult matter or original thinking the reverse holds good.

In the one case it is to be remedied by **Condensation**, in the other by **Paraphrase.**

A good example of a sentence made clearer by shortening is given by Mr. Bain:—

"Pope professed to have learnt his poetry from Dryden, whom, whenever an opportunity presented, he praised through the whole period of his existence with unvaried liberality; and perhaps his character may receive some illustration if a comparison be instituted between him and the man whose pupil he was." Condense thus:—

"Pope professed himself the pupil of Dryden, whom he lost no opportunity of praising; and his character is illustrated by comparison with his master." Nothing material is lost.

Any volume of Annotations on such authors as Aristotle or Bacon, or any volume of Sermons, supplies abundant examples of Paraphrase. Both processes should be practised as Exercises.

The Art of Condensation, especially in the form of Precis writing (where the gist of a whole correspondence or volume of evidence is given in a few pages), is the talent of a good reporter.

The Art of Expansion—the power of spinning sentences—is the talent of a popular preacher.

CHAPTER III.

PRECISION. AMBIGUITY IN WORDS.

THE Precision or definiteness of meaning essential to Perspicuity may be violated in two ways by using words vaguely—A. We may be left in doubt as to what they mean. B. We may be left in doubt as to what they refer to.

A.

Errors under this head differ from those treated of under the head of Accuracy; because in those the words were altogether out of place, in these the only fault is their ambiguity.

There is no part of speech which is not liable, when carelessly employed, to be misconstrued; *e.g.*—

(*a*) **Nouns**—

"A man who has lost his eyesight has *in one sense* less consciousness."

"His *presence* was against him."

"I will have mercy and not *sacrifice*." Sacrifice might be mistaken for a verb.

"Great Bulgaria no longer exists except in the historical memory; many people still think it would have been better if it did *in fact*."

(*b*) **Adjectives**—

"We have a right to destroy such animals as are *mortal*," i.e., deadly.

"Our sympathies are naturally divided as to the *revolting* Bulgarians."

"He has *a certain* property in the town."

"It is not *true*." This may mean either false or inaccurate.

"His views are *wrong*," incorrect or immoral?

(*c*) **Verbs and Participles**—

"It was *overlooked* by one man, and many passages wholly written by another."

"I have long since learnt to like nothing but what you *do*."

"I did not speak yesterday, as I wished to *have done*."

N.B. Distinguish between "do" as a principal verb and as an auxiliary.

"*Seeing* dreams cannot be received as evidence: there is nothing here to influence you."

"The poet *dreaming* of the past and future forgets the present." Does this mean "when he dreams," or "since he dreams, as all poets do"?

"Common sense," said a loud speaker, "is what we *want*." "Common sense," retorted a wit in the audience, "*is* what *you want*."

"Two sisters *want washing*." This advertisement has a double ambiguity: both verb and participle are ambiguous. It really means 'they desire to wash'; it might mean 'they require to be washed.'

(*d*) **Adverbs, Pronouns, and Connectives.** "Both the ecclesiastical and secular powers concurred in these measures." This refers to two sets of power, but the rule which, when two things are meant, prescribes the repetition of the article before the second of two coupled adjectives is here broken. We say "the pious and the profane," not "the pious and profane." The same rule applies to coupled nouns.

In disjunctive clauses the repetition of the disjunctive particle is not requisite, but it may be employed for emphasis, as—"Neither by law nor by right nor by custom can this be maintained."

"The Reformation *of* Luther," "The love *of* God," illustrate the double meaning of the proposition "of."

"If I am not commended for the beauty of my works I hope to be pardoned *for* their brevity." "For" means "because of," but this is not obvious.

"Nothing less" is ambiguous in the following:—"They aimed at *nothing less* than the crown."

The indiscreet use of the following particles ought to be specially noticed:—

Only for **Alone.**

"Not *only* Jesuits can equivocate."
"You *only* have stood by me throughout."

Alone may be insufficiently definite, as in the line from Virgil, "Must I wage war with this race alone for so many years?" read, "with this single race."

Because after **Not.** "They have not the spleen because they cannot talk without a glass." Insert "merely" before "because," or write "It does not follow that they have," &c.

All not for **Not all.** This is a very common error. "Though *all* seeds do *not* contain albumen, this substance is found in every embryo sac." "*All* who lay claim to these virtues are *not* to be depended on."

(*e*) A regard for Perspicuity proscribes using the same word in different senses in the same sentence. "I am so angry to hear it said *that* I am incapable *that* I shall resign." "He turned to the *left* and *left* the room." "The *truth* is error and *truth* are blended." "Other men may give *more*, but cannot give *more* evident signs of thought." The first "more" should be "more numerous."

B.

The most fertile source of confusion in English is a slovenly use of the **Relatives.** The cases and genders in Latin, Greek and German refer, for the most part with sufficient clearness, the consequents to their antecedents. Ambiguity in this respect is the greatest drawback of a comparatively uninflected language. Our masculine and feminine pronouns retain only a few inflections, and, when two or more persons are alluded to, these are insufficiently explicit. There is nothing to indicate the antecedents of "Which" or "It" beyond the fact of their being neuter, and where everything is neuter but male and female persons this does not carry us far. "That" may refer to anything. "*They*," "*Their*," "*Them*," "*His*," "*That*," "*Which*,"

and "*It*," are therefore the great stumbling-blocks of our language.

Volumes might be filled with instances like the following in illustration of the difficulty :—

"The priests transmitted to the ignorant population the instruction which *they themselves* were unable to acquire"; read, "The priests were the means of conveying instruction to a population too ignorant to acquire it for themselves."

"Beaumont was so accurate a judge of plays, that Ben Jonson, *while he* lived, submitted all *his* writings to *his* censure, and 'tis thought used *his* judgment in correcting, if not contriving, all *his* plots." Jonson long survived Beaumont; we must therefore read:—"Beaumont was so accurate a judge of plays, that as long as he lived all Ben Jonson's writings were submitted to his censure. It is thought that Jonson even used Beaumont's judgment," &c.

"I cannot say how much I delight to witness that energetic spirit *which* distinguishes the local authorities in this town, *and which* shows that that happy system of local government to *which* Lord Carnarvon has so well alluded, *and which* is quite as characteristic of this country and quite as important to this country as the great Parliament *which* meets in London, *and which* attracts the admiration of the world, is worked efficiently among you"; read, "I cannot say how much I delight to witness the energetic spirit that distinguishes the local authorities in this town. It shows that the happy system of local government to which Lord Carnarvon has so well alluded, a system quite as characteristic of this country and quite as important to this country as the great Parliament which in London attracts the admiration of the world, is efficiently worked among you."

"For the custom of the manor has in both cases so far superseded the will of the lord that, provided the services be performed or stipulated for by fealty, *he* cannot in the first instance refuse to admit the heir of *his* tenant upon *his* death, nor in the second can *he* remove *his* present tenant as long as *he* lives"; read, "He cannot in the first instance refuse to admit the heir of his tenant upon that tenant's death, nor in the second can the lord remove the tenant during the tenant's life."

"The sharks *who* prey upon the inadvertency of young heirs are more pardonable than *those who* trespass upon the good opinion of *those who* treat them upon the footing of choice and respect"; read, "are more pardonable than the fellows who trespass upon the good opinion of men graciously treating them with favour and respect."

"They were summoned occasionally by *their* kings, when compelled by *their* wants or *their* fears, to have recourse to *their* aid"; read, "They were summoned occasionally by their kings,

when the wants or the fears of the sovereign compelled him to have recourse to the aid of his people."

"If *it* were spoken with never so great skill in the actor, the manner of uttering that sentence could have nothing in *it* which could strike any but people of the greatest humanity, nay, people elegant and skilful in observations upon *it*"; read, "There could be nothing in the manner of uttering that sentence calculated to strike any but people of the greatest humanity, people elegant and skilful in remarking on such delicacies of expression."

"When," says Cobbett, "I see many 'Its' in a page, I tremble for the writer."

"He said to his patient that if *he* did not feel better in half an hour, *he* thought *he* had better return; by *which* remark *he* designed to induce *him* to take care of *himself;* but he *who* is naturally reckless is hard to persuade to caution, *which* was seen in the case of *which* I am speaking, a good instance *that that which* a man will not do for *himself he* will not do at another's bidding"; read, "He said to his patient, 'If you do not feel better in half an hour, I think I had better be sent for again,' designing (or whereby he designed) to induce him to be careful of his health; but a naturally reckless man will not be cautioned. This will be seen in the case I speak of, a good instance that what one will not do for himself he will not do for another."

A similar ambiguity is frequent in verse:—

> "Such were the centaurs of Ixion's race,
> *Who* a bright cloud for Juno did embrace."

The modes of dealing with the confused relative indicated in the above illustrations are mainly the following:—

1. Repetition of the antecedent noun, or use of an equivalent noun.
2. Substitution of "whereby" for "by which," "if" for "that," "what" for "that which," or of the participle for relative and verb.
3. The employment of seasonable ellipses, as omission of the relative.
4. Lopping off redundancies.
5. Changing the construction.
6. Breaking up a lumbering sentence into shorter sentences.
7. Turning indirect into direct quotations.

Special confusion is produced by *changing the nominative.* The following are ambiguous, owing to the heterogeneous character of the consequents.

"Our ancient Saxon laws nominally punished theft with death, if above the value of twelve pence; but the criminal was permitted to redeem his life by a pecuniary ransom, as among *their* German ancestors"; read "if the value of the goods stolen was above the value of twelve pence; but the criminal was permitted to redeem his life by a pecuniary ransom, a custom which prevailed among our German ancestors."

"There are indeed but very few who know how to be idle and innocent, or to have a relish of any pleasures that are not criminal: every diversion they take is at the expense of some one virtue or other, and their first step out of business is into vice or error"; read "Few know how to be harmlessly idle or to relish innocent pleasures. The rule with most men is that every diversion they take sacrifices some virtue, and they only step out of business into some folly."

Be careful to **compare like things**, men with men, books with books, &c. This rule is violated in the following:—

"A savage is a better state of life than a slave;" read, "The life of a savage is better than that of a slave."

"The unwearied *exertions* of this gentleman have done more towards elucidating the obscurities and embellishing the structure of our language than *any other writer* on the subject. Such a work has long been wanted"; read "than those of any other writer. A work answering those demands."

A similar ambiguity sometimes adheres to relative phrases, as in the following:—

"A self-made man arrived in California with only one shirt to his back, and since, he has contrived to accumulate *over ten millions.*

"The night was very dark, and a man named Brewer came to the assistance of some women who

heard the cry, and splashing with a broom he saw the *hand of a woman groaning* on the other side of the water, and he held out the broom." The last sentence probably means, "The night was very dark, and a man named Brewer came to the assistance of some women who had heard the cry. Splashing with a broom, he saw the hand of a woman who was," &c.

Incongruities or inconsistencies of thought or expression like the following are always obscure:—

"It will *invariably* be found to be the case *as a rule* that when a fine sentiment comes from his pen it is not his own."

"The process of throwing the accent of a word *back*, is one which we may note constantly going *forward*."

Never write a personal pronoun or relative phrase without considering what antecedent it may, upon reading the sentence, be supposed to refer to.

Repeat the noun if you cannot use a pronoun quite unambiguously. When there are several particulars in the antecedent you may gather them together by such phrases as "Then," "I say," "This being so," but employ these sparingly.

CHAPTER IV.

ARRANGEMENT.

AMBIGUITY and confusion often arise from carelessness in arranging the parts of a sentence. The main rules to be observed in this respect are the following:—

I. Preserve, with few exceptions, the normal order which is, in English:—

(*a*) In simple sentences—

Subject—Predicate,

or more fully, Subject—Verb—Object.

(*b*) In complex sentences—

Qualifying word — Subject — Modifying Clause — Verb—Qualifying word or phrase—Object.

Inversion is the rule in Interrogations—"Can I?"

Otherwise it should seldom be employed in simple statement. It is an affectation to say "very true it is" instead of "It is very true." "Of William Shakespeare was this said" for "This was said of," &c. Observe that the inversions so frequent in English verse are often sources of ambiguity, as in the line—

"And thus the son the fervent sire addressed."

"The rising tomb a lofty column bore."

The same kind of ambiguity occurs in Latin, despite the aid of inflections, especially in the construction of the accusative with the infinitive—

"Aio te Æacidem Romanos vincere posse."

"Formosam resonare doces Amaryllida silvas."

Inversion (*v. inf.*) is often justifiable; but *never invert without being able to give a reason for it.*

II. Qualifying words, whether adjectives or adverbs, should be placed as near as possible to those which they qualify.

A single *Adjective* properly precedes its noun: thus we say "a popular orator," not "an orator popular"; but when the adjective is modified, restricted, or emphasized, it generally follows the noun—"An orator by his very violence popular with the fanatical faction."

Adverbs follow neuter verbs—"He spoke recklessly." They generally come before active verbs—"Pompey rashly engaged Cæsar at Pharsalia"; but exceptions occur; *e.g.*, "He loved him *much*."

When there is an auxiliary and a verb the adverb has, as a rule, its proper place between them—"Courage has *always* enlisted esteem." But we say, "He has spoken *recklessly*."

When there are two auxiliaries in a sentence with an active verb the adverb falls between them—"He might *readily* have answered my question"; but in a

passive sentence it follows both auxiliaries—"I shall be *utterly* undone."

When two adverbs, one of time the other of manner, attend one verb, the rule is to place the adverb of time before, that of manner after, the verb; *e.g.*, "She *often* wept *bitterly*."

Whether the adverb follows or precedes, be careful to place it so as to leave no doubt what word it qualifies. The following are wrongly arranged—"Man is capable of laughing *always*." "We do those things *frequently* which we repent of afterwards."

III. Be especially careful in using the adverbs "Only," "Solely," "Equally," and the adverbial phrases "At least," "At all events," "At any rate," also "Neither." The misplacement of these is a continually recurring source of confusion, which the following instances may be taken to illustrate:—

"The negroes are to appear at church *only* in boots." This might mean "They are to appear at church, but they must be in boots"; or, "When they come to church they need have nothing on but boots." Whereas the real meaning is "They are to appear only at church in boots"; or more explicitly, "The only place where they are allowed to wear boots is at church."

"Not to exasperate him, I *only* spoke a few words," read "spoke only."

For "The world is brazen, the poets *only* represent a golden," read "only the poets."

"You *only* I accept as my leader," read "I accept only you," or "I accept you alone."

It is often advisable to substitute "alone" for "only," where the latter word is ambiguous.

On the other hand, "alone" is sometimes more ambiguous than "only"; *e.g.*, "This fact a religious census *alone* can give."

"He employed his power for the gratification *solely* of his passions," read "solely for," &c.

"Thanks should have been given *equally* to my colleague in these labours as to myself," read, "equally as to myself."

"Sixtus the Fourth was a great collector of books *at least*," read "at least a great collector."

"His own performance *at all events* was as good as his promise," read "was at all events as good."

"The poetry of ancient times *at any rate* is more original than ours," read "is at any rate more original."

"If Louis XIV. was not the greatest king, he was the best actor of majesty *at least* that ever filled a throne," read "at least the best actor," &c.

"The atrocious crime of being a young man I shall *neither* attempt to palliate nor deny," read "attempt neither to palliate," &c.

IV. Be careful to set interposed circumstances, qualifying phrases or clauses, as near as possible to the subjects to which they refer. Never let them stand between two leading members of a sentence. When the sentence is inverted let the qualifying phrases precede. The following ambiguities might have been easily avoided by attention to these rules:—

"I had several men died *in my ship of fever*," read "Several men in my ship died of fever."

"By Tautology is meant that form of expression in which we suggest the meaning we *would be at in more ways than one*," read "in which we suggest in more ways than one," &c.

"The witness had been ordered to withdraw, in consequence of *being intoxicated, by the motion* of an honourable member." Place "by the motion" first, or after "ordered."

"We know how the doctrine of spiritual independence has been expounded since the Patronage Act *was passed by the Free Church leaders*." Place "by the Free Church leaders" after "expounded."

"Whatever irrational people on both sides in this

country may urge, the pretensions of San Stephano have been *reduced to a vast extent*"; read "have been to a vast extent reduced."

"A woman was seen loitering about the place where *the child was seen carrying a child*," read "A woman carrying a child."

"From Doune we learn that Mr. Munro *killed fifteen brace of grouse along with a friend* on his moor ten days ago," read "From Doune we learn that, ten days ago, Mr. Munro, along with a friend, killed," &c.

"The rabid animal, before it could be killed, severely bit *Mr. Hutton and several other dogs*." Put the "other dogs" before Mr. Hutton.

"I hope *not much to serve* those whom I shall not happen to please." read "I do not much hope to serve," &c.

Observe that the absurdity of the false readings is no excuse for this kind of ambiguity, which, as in the case of the Roman will commanding an heir to erect "auream statuam hastam tenentem," has often led to almost interminable lawsuits.

V. The ambiguity of relative clauses frequently arises from their misplacement. The rule is to place the pronoun as near as possible to the noun or other antecedent to which it refers. In the following a simple rearrangement is enough to dispel the confusion:—

"It is folly to pretend to arm ourselves against the accidents of life by heaping up *treasures*, *which* nothing can protect us against but the good providence of God;" read, "It is folly to pretend, by heaping up treasures, to arm ourselves against the accidents of life, against which nothing but the good providence of God can protect us."

Sometimes, however, the sentence requires further reconstruction; *e.g.*—

"He was taking a view from a window of the cathedral of Litchfield, *in which* a party of royalists

had entrenched themselves;" read, "A party of royalists having entrenched themselves in the cathedral, he was taking a view of it from a window."

VI. Remember that in every sentence there ought to be one main assertion. The distinct perception of this—the backbone of the sentence—tends to secure the **Unity** among its clauses essential to Perspicuity and Precision. The following are the main rules for the preservation of this unity:—

1. *Avoid changing the nominative or the construction*, even where such a change does not, as in the instances given under the head of Accuracy, result in false grammar; *e.g.*—

"Desire of pleasure *ushers* in temptation, and the growth of disorderly passions *is forwarded;*" read, after "temptation," "and forwards (or stimulates) the growth," &c.

"A short time after this injury *he* came to himself, and the next day *they* put him on board a ship, *which* conveyed him first to Corinth and thence to the island of Ægina;" read, "and the next day was put on board a ship and conveyed," &c.

2. Use **Parentheses** *cautiously and moderately.* Let them be brief, and so set that there can be no doubt to what they refer. Never set Parentheses within Parentheses, like wheels within wheels: such a mode of construction is like a Chinese puzzle. The following transgress these rules:—

(*a*) "Gill no longer needing to be styled 'the younger' (for *his father* had been dead since 1635, and *he was* now a man of forty-two and a Doctor of Divinity to boot), was still in his father's place as head-master of St. Paul's School." To be converted into English, this sentence requires to be entirely recast. The parenthesis, if it means anything, means that the dead man was still a Doctor of Divinity forty-two years old.

(*b*) "Disappointments will often happen to the best

and wisest of men (not through any imprudence of theirs, nor even through the malice or ill-design of others; but merely in consequence of some of those cross incidents of life which could not be foreseen), and sometimes to the wisest and best concerted plans;" read, "Disappointments will often happen to the wisest of men, and their best concerted plans will be upset, through no imprudence of their own or malice of others, but simply in consequence of some unforeseen cross accident."

(*c*) Never delay till to-morrow (for to-morrow is not yours; and, though you should live to enjoy it (and remember how uncertain this is), you must not overload it with a burden not its own) what reason and conscience tell you ought to be performed to-day;" read, "Never delay till to-morrow what reason and conscience tell you ought to be performed to-day. To-morrow is not yours; and though you should live to enjoy it, which is always uncertain, you must not overload it with alien burdens."

A short parenthesis, on the other hand, is sometimes conducive to clearness; *e.g.*—

"The outrages perpetrated by the Bulgars (if evidence is aught) have been more monstrous than those perpetrated by the Turks" is better than if the parenthesis were placed either before or after; so in the following:—

"His arguments (though founded on fact) had no effect on the excited mob."

3. *Do not introduce too many qualifying clauses* into one sentence, nor stretch it beyond its natural close. Distinguish between the *Unity of a Sentence* which carries, with a limited number of modifications, a single assertion, and the *Unity of a Paragraph* which conveys all that is to be said about one view of a subject.

The following is a crowded sentence, with a "tag" at the end:—

"Here it was found of absolute necessity to inflame or cool the passions of the audience, especially at Rome, where Tully spoke, and with whose writings young divines (I mean those among them who read old authors) are more conversant than with those of Demosthenes, who by many degrees excelled the other, *at least as an orator;*" read, "Here it was a necessity to inflame or cool the passions of the audience. This was especially the case at Rome, where Tully spoke. Young divines who read old authors at all were more conversant with his writings than with those of Demosthenes, who, at least as an orator, far excelled him."

Two distinct assertions, which ought to form two sentences, are often incongruously glued into the appearance of one by the use of "and," "or," "for," "yet," &c. Remember that there is no virtue in an "and" or any other particle, except to make more plain a connection already existing between the thoughts expressed by the connected clauses. A needless "and" only perplexes the reader by setting him to look for a connection where none exists. The remedy for such confusions is generally to strike out the spurious links and begin new sentences; *e.g.*—

"Boast not thyself of to-morrow; thou knowest not what a day may bring forth: *because of this it is that* we cannot rely on it; *and, for the same reason,* despair not of to-morrow, *for* it may bring good as well as evil, *which is a ground for not vexing* thyself with imaginary fears; *for* the cloud may pass by harmless; *or* though it should discharge the storm, *yet* before it breaks thou mayst be lodged in that mansion which no storms ever touch"; read, "Boast not of to-morrow; thou knowest not and canst not rely on what a day may bring forth. Despair not of to-morrow: it may bring forth good as well as ill. So vex not thyself with imaginary fears. The cloud may pass, and, though it should discharge the storm, before it breaks," &c.

"I single him out from among the moderns because he had the foolish presumption to censure Tacitus, and to write history himself; and your Lordship will forgive this short excursion in honour of a favourite author"; read "I single him out, &c., because he had the presumption to censure Tacitus, and himself to attempt history. Your Lordship will forgive," &c.

Where a number of qualities or circumstances apply to a subject, it often adds to the precision of a sentence to introduce these first, or at least early; *e.g.*—

"The minister could not persuade the House to see the wisdom of his course, *though he was* eloquent, astute, experienced in all the circumstances, and aided by all the advice attainable in the difficulties of the case"; better thus—"Eloquent, astute, experienced in all the circumstances, and advised in all the difficulties of the case, the minister yet failed to persuade the House to see the wisdom of his course."

Observe that almost all the changes suggested in the above sentences are in the direction of greater brevity.

Simplicity, *brevity*, and *good order* are the mainstays of *perspicuity* and *precision* of style; without which, as has well been said, ornaments only glimmer through the dark.

PART IV.

STRENGTH AND GRACE OF STYLE.

ACCURACY and Clearness are essential in every composition. To write forcibly we must write precisely; but our writing may be perfectly clear and yet weak or ineffective. Strength and Grace of style are, in great measure, the results of strength and grace of thought which cannot be imparted by rules: but there are some rules which have been found useful in the higher branches of Prose, and even in Poetry. It is possible here only to indicate a few of the most important of these which relate to—

(*a*) The choice of words.
(*b*) The number of words.
(*c*) The order of words.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHOICE OF WORDS.

A.—PLAIN WORDS.

OF various ways of saying the same thing, that which is most expressive is the best, and, in most instances, that which is the simplest is the most expressive. So to present ideas that they may be apprehended with the least possible mental effort should be our object in every sentence we write: for, as Mr. H. Spencer remarks, the time spent in trying to understand the words is so much taken from the time the hearer has at his disposal to realize and reflect upon the thought. It has been observed that very simple ideas are often conveyed most forcibly by signs, *i.e.*, "leave the room," by pointing to the door; "do not speak," by placing a finger on the lips; "come here," by a wave of the hand.

Such signs or rude pantomimes will, it is true, not carry us far; but the nearer our words approach to them *in point of directness* the better.

This confirms the rule, already laid down, as to the general preference of words from the native portion of our vocabulary. Our Anglo-Saxon words are not only, from early association, more suggestive than those derived from the Latin, they are also, in most cases, more specific, being employed to denote most of the objects perceived through the senses as well as the great features and changes of nature. The majority of our Latin words, on the other hand, represent generalized or abstract ideas. Mr. Spalding observes —"We use a foreign term naturalized when we speak of 'colour' universally, but we fall back on our home stores if we have to tell what the colour is, calling it 'red,' or 'yellow,' 'white,' or 'black,' 'green,' or 'brown.' We are Romans when we speak in a general way of 'moving,' but we are Teutons if we 'leap,' or 'spring,' if we 'slip,' 'slide,' or 'fall,' if we 'walk,' 'run,' 'swim,' or 'ride,' if we 'creep,' 'crawl,' or 'fly.'"

It is better to use the more definite word whenever we can do so with accuracy. Thus, if we do not know whether a distant object is male or female, we must speak of "a person"; but when it approaches, and we can distinguish the sex, we are able to refer to it as "a man," or "a woman." Only individuals have a real existence, and the more exact the word we can use, the more real the knowledge we convey. Campbell says—"The more general the terms are, the picture is the fainter, the more special, the brighter." "They sank like *lead* in the waters" is more forcible than "they fell like *metal*"; "Ye yourselves know that *these hands* have ministered to my necessities," than "I by my own labour," &c.; "I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel," than "no man's wealth or possession." Suppose we write:—

"In proportion as the manners, customs, and amusements of a nation are cruel and barbarous, the

regulations of their penal code will be severe," the sentence is correct and the idea clear; but we may make it more vigorous by identification, thus:—"In proportion as men delight in battles, bull fights, and combats of gladiators, will they punish by hanging, burning, and the rack": for in the latter case we have done for the reader what in the former he was left to do for himself.

"Consider the lilies of the field, they toil not, neither do they spin" is far more suggestive than "The flowers they do no manner of work"; "Solomon in all his glory," than "The greatest and wisest monarch"; "Fragrant as the smell of Lebanon," than "The odour of cedar trees."

The same force is attained by the same means in verse; *e.g.*—

> "Thence up he flew, and on the tree of life
> Sat *like a cormorant.*"
>
> "Him there they found
> Squat *like a toad.*"

It is, however, to be observed that we cannot always assert of the concrete what we may of the abstract. Words derived from the Latin have their proper places in our speech: there are ideas we cannot express without them, and they enable us to vary our form of expression. To extrude them would therefore be a serious loss. The exclusive use of Saxon terms or monosyllables is an uncalled for and absurd surrender of much of our inheritance from the past. It is therefore a foolish fashion and a grave fault of style. All we can say is that the tendency, especially of young writers, has hitherto been to give undue prominence to the most sonorous but otherwise least effective element of our language. We should be as simple in our choice of words as we can be without rejecting any of the conspicuous advantages which, by the very fact of its being in its vocabulary a composite language, the use of English affords.

Write naturally is a rule to which there is no exception. Every form of Affectation, whether in the direction of pompous intricacy or childish simplicity, is, as we have seen, an offence against Perspicuity: it is also a source of weakness. Hence, besides avoiding roundabout expressions and remote allusions we should, in ordinary matter, make a sparing use of *Quotations.* Shun especially those which have become hackneyed, as references to the "Phœnix" and the "Upas tree," to the "Parnassian mount" and "the Castalian fount," with such well-worn phrases as "Sturm und Drang," "Curiosa felicitas," "Sweetness and light," "Fantastic toe," "Slings and arrows of fortune." Excerpts from "Hamlet," Pope's "Essay on Man," and the works of Mr. Tennyson, are too frequently introduced by our inferior writers.

Avoid equally all loud or exaggerated language; *e.g.*—the frequent use of such adjectives as "stupendous," "boundless," "tremendous," "prodigious," "unspeakable," "rapturous," "glorious," "infinite," "incalculable," "awful," "majestic," or such expressions as "oceans of thought," "mammoth caves of discovery." Feeble writers almost invariably delight in superlatives; strong writers dispense with them.

With a view to grace and melody avoid as much as possible harsh sounding or lumbering words, as—"primarily," "summarily," "holily," "lowlily," "authenticalness," "unsuccessfulness," "peremptoriness," "conventiclers," "drudged," "fledged," "budged."

An exception to this rule occurs when the sound is purposely made rough to represent either the actual sound made by the thing spoken of or harsh ideas associated with it. This resemblance or analogy between sound and sense is called *Onomatopeia*, and is frequently employed with effect especially in descriptive poetry. But it is a license the limits of which we cannot here define.

Considerations of Harmony also proscribe the too frequent use of particles, as "and," "but," "how,"

"that," &c., which interrupt unseasonably the flow of the sentences. For the same reason, repetition of the same word is only justified when demanded for clearness or when we desire to emphasize the subject to which it refers.

B.—Figurative Language.

The plainest language is not always the most forcible. A word cannot be too natural but it may be too familiar. A great orator, after a great war, produced a profound impression by saying in the House of Commons—

"The Angel of Death has been abroad through the land: we may almost hear the *beating* of his wings."

"If," said a critic after the debate—"If you had said '*flapping*' we would have laughed."

In animated discourse or composition vivacity is often promoted by the use of **Figures of Speech** in which words or phrases are used in a sense different from that generally assigned to them. Their object is to make one idea throw light upon another, by bringing into view some previously hidden quality of the things of which we are speaking. These Figures, sometimes called *Tropes* (τρεπειν, because the words are turned or twisted from their obvious signification), are mainly founded on Resemblance, Association in time or place, and Contrast.

Chief Rhetorical Figures and Forms of Speech.

Resemblance.	Contiguity.	Contrast or Surprise.	Arrangement.
a. Comparison or Simile.	*a.* Autonomasia—Individual for class.	*a.* Antithesis and Epigram.	*a.* Climax.
b. Metaphor— 1. Identification of like qualities. 2. Identification of like things.	*b.* Synecdoche—Part for whole.	*b.* Hyperbole.	*b.* Anti-climax.
c. Personification.	*c.* Metonymy—Cause for effect, badge for class, &c.	*c.* Irony and Euphemism.	*c.* Inversion.
d. Allegory.			

I. **Figures founded on Resemblance**—

1. The **Simile**, though generally brought under this head, is not, strictly speaking, a figure: it is a fully stated comparison; as—"The warrior fought like a lion," "His spear was like the mast of a ship," "His wrath was as the storm;" or when Pope says—

> "True ease in writing comes from art not chance,
> As they move easiest who have learnt to dance."

Similes are appropriate when they consistently enliven the subject, that is when, without violating truth, they make it clearer or bring its relations more strikingly before us. The comparison must be between things of otherwise different kinds, but having a likeness in the quality to which attention is directed. This likeness must not be too obvious—when it would not be worth while to make the comparison—or too remote, when it would make the subject less instead of more intelligible.

Similes should therefore neither be trite nor fantastical.

2. The **Metaphor** is a figure which consists in the substitution of one word or phrase for another. It is founded on a real or fancied identity in some prominent quality or qualities of two or more things. As with the Simile, its use is justified when it conveys a correct idea with greater force than the ordinary word would have done: unlike the Simile, it does not state the resemblance, it takes that for granted and proceeds as if the two things were one—we no longer say, "He fought *like* a lion," but, "He *was* a lion in the fight."

There are two degrees of Metaphor—

(*a*) In the first, attributes properly belonging to one thing are applied to another. A large class of phrases originally metaphorical have been so widely adopted that they have ceased to be regarded as figurative. Those consist for the most part of terms originally confined to physical which have been trans-

ferred to mental things or states. Thus we speak of "a *clear* head," "a *hard* heart," of "*smooth* manners," "*soft* words," "*rooted* prejudice," "*glowing* eloquence," "*unbridled* passion," of the "*light* of nature," of "reasoning in a *circle*," of being "*inflamed* with anger," "*swollen* with pride," "*melted* with grief," of "*reflection*," "*animation*," "financial *prospects*," &c., without any idea that we are speaking metaphorically.

In other cases where the figurative use of the word is bolder or not so generally received, the metaphor is more readily recognized; as in such phrases as—"the *tottering* State," "*virgin* snow," "*shallow* fears," "*summer* life," "a *black* omen," "a day *dark* with fate."

Metaphors in which the terms proper to one sense or faculty are transferred to another are not uncommon. "*Sweet* scent," "*soft* whisper," "*harsh* contrast," and others, have become stereotyped. Dr. Young's "*shadow* of a sound" is more startling, and, generally speaking, innovations of this sort should be avoided.

(*b*) In the second degree one thing is completely identified, for the time being, with another. Thus, instead of "A good man enjoys comfort even in adversity," we have "To the upright there arises light in darkness;" for "I look to thee for defence and counsel," "Thou art my *rock* and my *fortress*," "Thy word is a *lamp* to my feet and a *light* to my path." Similarly, a statesman is called "the head of his party," Athens "the eye of Greece," Sleep "Nature's soft nurse," the dawn "the rosy-fingered Goddess," the Sun "the King of day," &c.

When, as in the last instance, life is distinctly attributed to inanimate things or abstract states, a special name is given to the metaphor; it is called

3. **Personification.** As is the case with other metaphors, this may consist in the attribution of a sentient quality to the subject—as when we speak of "the

childhood of a nation," of "a *learned* age," of "the *thirsty* ground," of "*eager* darts," of "*winged* words," of "the *imperious* sea,"—or the attribution of a fully conscious life—as when Milton writes, "*Earth felt* the wound," or Addison imagines the heavenly bodies "*proclaiming* their great Original," or Shelley makes the cloud say, "I am the *daughter* of earth and water," or calls the moon "an orbed *maiden*."

The *Apostrophe* is a Personification accompanied by an address, or an address to an absent person.

This image is frequent in the classics; *e.g.*—

"Trojaque nunc stares, Priamique arx alta maneres,"

and in the so-called poems of Ossian; *e.g.*—

"Happy are thy people, O Fingal; thine arm shall fight their battles. Thou art the first in their dangers: the wisest in the days of their peace."

"Ye hills and dales, ye rivers, woods, and plains,
And ye that live and move, fair creatures, tell."

"Quid non mortalia pectora coges
Auri sacra fames?"

4. **Allegory**, under which head fall Fables and Parables, is an extended Metaphor generally accompanied by Personification. It does not, however, like the Simile assert that one thing resembles another, nor, as with the ordinary Metaphor, does it directly figure one thing to be another. Allegory chooses a like subject, and talks of it so as to suggest the other. It is a hieroglyphical painting where words are used instead of colours. Sometimes, as in the Parables of the New Testament and some of the Fables attributed to Æsop, an interpretation is appended at the close. More frequently, as in the allegorical passages of the Hebrew Prophets, *e.g.*, "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt;" in Spenser's Faery Queen, and Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, the reader, with the aid of aptly chosen names and circumstances, is left to interpret the story for himself.

Extended personifications, as Milton's Sin and Death, are sometimes called Allegories.

A Metaphor which implies is generally preferable to a Simile which expresses a Comparison, because it is more terse, and leaves room for an agreeable mental exercise in detecting the exact points of likeness. Shelley in the "Prometheus Unbound" speaks of the wind "shepherding" flocks of fleecy clouds along the mountains, which is better than if he had said that the wind blew them about as a shepherd drives his flock. So, in his address to Time, "Unfathomable sea whose waves are years," the last part of the metaphor explains the first: but where we have a more remote analogy, as towards the close of the "Adonais,"

> "Life like a dome of many-coloured glass
> Stains the white radiance of Eternity,"

we require the Comparison to be fully drawn out.

The most important of the general rules that apply to all these figures are the following:—

(*a*) *The image must be suited to the subject.* We must not degrade dignified material by mean comparisons, nor attempt to exalt insignificant themes by magniloquent phrases. The latter is the more common error. Metaphors and poetical epithets are the colours of speech: where the idea is great the "large utterance" which answers to it is like the natural glow of the complexion in health: but the attempt to dignify poverty of thought with sonorous words only brings into stronger relief the flatness of the matter.

(*b*) The image must not be far-fetched or overstrained. *The bad habit of drawing out consequences from a figure*, of crowding images together, of weaving metaphor on metaphor, is constantly illustrated in Cowley's poetry, and frequently in Dr. Young's "Night Thoughts;" *e.g.*—

> "Walk thoughtful on the silent solemn shore
> Of that vast ocean, it must sail so soon
> And *put good works on board* and wait the wind
> That shortly blows us into worlds unknown."

(*c*) *The metaphor must be consistent* throughout, and nothing should be brought forward in the paragraph to which it belongs that cannot be applied to the subject in both its literary and figurative use; *e.g.*, in the following this rule is violated—

"Long to my joys my dearest lord is lost,
His country's buckler, and the Grecian boast,
Now from my fond embrace by tempests torn
Our *other column* of the state is borne,
Nor *took a kind adieu*, nor sought content."

Mixed Metaphors ought to be sedulously shunned, for they directly traverse the purpose which the judicious use of figurative language is designed to fulfil, and instead of making the idea more vivid blur it over with incongruities. The following are glaring instances of this offence :—

"Comets importing change of times and states,
Brandish your *chrystal tresses* in the sky,
And with them *scourge* the bad revolting stars."

Tresses can hardly be made of glass, or used as whips.

"When even an archbishop begun to *hold his nose*, and to complain of the air being poisoned in the vicinity of his palace, the *pressure* became irresistible."

"Those whose minds are dull and heavy, do not easily penetrate into the folds and intricacies of an affair; and, therefore, they can only scum off what they find at the top."

"You are in the *morning* of life, and that is a *season* for enjoyment." Youth may be compared to the morning, but that is not a season.

"Lord Kimberley said that in taking a *very large bite* of the Turkish *cherry* the *way had been paved* for its partition at no distant day." We cannot well be said to pave the way for the partition of a cherry.

"Lord Roseberry said the *key-note* of the policy of the Government would be *wrapped* in that *obscurity*

which the Government have endeavoured to *keep up.*" This is a medley of metaphor, as are the following :—

"They *sailed in the same boat* on the hustings, and Mr. M. was *sandwiched* between them." "In a moment the *thunderbolt* was on them, *deluging* the country with invaders." "There is not a single *view* of human nature that is not enough to *extinguish* the *seeds* of pride."

Note, however, that the same subject may be illustrated by a *succession* of apt metaphors, and that where they are kept distinct from one another they present themselves to the mind like a series of scenes. There is thus no improper *mixture* of imagery in the following eloquent passages:—

"It seems to me a strange and a thing much to be marvelled that the labourer to repose himself hasteneth as it were the course of the sun; that the mariner rows with all force to attain the port, and with a joyful cry salutes the descried land; that the traveller is never contented nor quiet till he be at the end of his voyage; and that we in the meanwhile, tied in this world to a perpetual task, tossed with continual tempests, tired with a rough and cumbersome way, yet cannot see the end of our labour but with grief, nor behold our port but with tears, nor approach our home and quiet abode but with horror and trembling.

"This life is a Penelope's web, wherein we are always doing and undoing; a sea open to all winds; a weary journey through extreme heats and colds over high mountains, steep rocks and thievish deserts: and so we term it in weaving at this web, in rowing at this oar, in passing this miserable way. Yet we when Death comes to end our work, when she stretcheth out her arms to pull us into the port, when, after so many dangerous passages she would conduct us to our true home and resting place, instead of rejoicing at the end of our labour, of taking comfort at the

sight of our land, of singing at the approach of our happy mansion, we would fain retake our work in hand, we would again hoist sail to the wind, and willingly undertake our journey anew. We fear more the cure than the disease, the surgeon than the pain, more the feeling of death the end of our miseries, than the endless misery of our life; we fear that we ought to hope for, and wish that we ought to fear."

This passage is also a conspicuous example of the successful employment of antithesis.—*V. infra.*

(*d*) *Never jumble together literal and figurative* statements in the same sentence; *e.g.*—

"The heroic Spanish gunners had no defence but *bags of cotton* joined to their own unconquerable *courage.*" Courage cannot be glued to bags.

"To thee the world its present homage pays
The *harvest* early, but mature the *praise.*"

"Praise" should be "crop" but it would not rhyme.

"Channing's mind was *planted* as thick *with thoughts* as a *backwood* of his own magnificent land." Add "with trees," or the expression is absurd.

The following drop from a laboured image to a plain statement is little better:—

"Present *appearances* in the political, religious, and commercial departments of our civilized world *hang* with a gloom of heavy clouds *over the dawn of the prospect* of a pacific era, but we . . . may be allowed to hold good against the suggestions of utter discouragement."

Observe that the appropriateness of a *Metaphor* may often be tested by drawing out the implied comparison, and so converting it into a *Simile.*

II. Figures founded on Association—

1. **Autonomasia** is a figure of concentration, which singles out a type and makes it stand for the kind to

which it belongs: it rests partly on resemblance and partly on historical association. The most common form is where a proper name is taken to represent a class—as "some village Hampden," "some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood." Addison in the *Spectator* employs this form almost to excess, but on the whole it adds greatly to the vivacity of his narrative: so also Virgil in his Eclogues. Pope perpetually employs it—

> "May every Bavius have his Bufo still."

In common discourse we talk of a Solomon, a Crœsus, a Demosthenes, a Cato; and similarly, of Chloes and Corydons as types of soft-hearted shepherdesses and sentimental swains. The rule is to ascertain that the names will readily suggest to the readers the character they are designed to represent.

A habit, derived from the classics, of substituting for the agencies of nature or the works of man the names of the *heathen gods* who presided over them—*i.e.*, of saying Ceres for bread, Bacchus for wine, Neptune for the sea, the Muse for poetry—once prevailed in our literature; but this practice has been justly censured as alien to our natural modes of thought, and therefore incongruous and untrue.

A Figure, akin to Autonomasia, consists in substituting the individual named by his leading characteristic, for the general rank or class to which he belongs, as when we make "the fool" stand for "folly," "the king" for his royalty, &c.; *e.g.*—

> "Nor durst begin
> To speak: but wisely kept *the fool* within."

Dryden's couplet,

> "Who follow next a double danger bring,
> Not only hating David but *the king*,"

would lose its point if we had to say, "Not only hating the man but his reign." A good instance of this figure

is the answer of Louis XII when urged to resent an offence received before his accession :—

"It does not become the king of France to avenge the injuries of the Duke of Orleans."

Another modification of the same concentrating process is the adoption of an abstract term instead of the persons to whom it is applicable. In this case we put one term denoting the quality of the class for the individuals, and say "Youth" for the young, "Beauty" for the fair, "Wisdom" for the wise.

Similarly, we have such expressions as—"Up goes my *grave impudence* to the maid," "You are not vicious, you *are vice*."

So the object of an act is identified with the act itself.

"The people's *prayer*, the glad diviner's theme,
The young men's *vision*, and the old man's *dream*."

2. **Synecdoche** occurs where the part is taken for the whole, the species for the genus, the material for the thing made of it, where the person is designated by the most conspicuous trait of his character or the effect he produces. Thus we may speak of "all hands being at work," of so many "head" of cattle, of "bread" for food in general, of "winters" or "summers" for years, of the "steel" for the sword, of the Deity as "the refuge of the oppressed and the terror of evil-doers," of a favourite statesman as "the nation's hope."

Synecdoche is admissible only when that part is selected which is the most prominent or the most interesting at the time when we are contemplating the objects: in both cases it is natural, and represents what is uppermost in our minds. Thus we may speak of seeing a fleet of *ten sail* at sea, but not of so many "sails" in the dock, or of "sails" ploughing the main. We may allude to houses as "roofs" when we are thinking of shelter, "I abjure all roofs," but we must not say "he laid the foundations of a roof."

3. **Metonymy**—where the effect is put for the cause—*e.g.*, "bringing a man's gray hairs to the grave"; or the cause for the effect—*e.g.*, "basking in the sun" depends for its force on the same principle. A good instance is

> "Neque unquam
> Solvitur in somnis, oculisve aut pectore *noctem*
> Accipit.

> "And could not draw
> The quiet *night* into her blood."

Similarly, we have an adjunct or symbol for the thing or rank—*e.g.*, "the crown," "the lawn," "the ermine," for the king, the bishops, and the law lords;

> "Cedant arma togæ; concedat laurea linguæ."

The containing for the contained appears in—"The palace and the cottage," "From the cradle to the grave," "Hausit spumantem pateram," &c.

We may say "the bar" and "the bench" for barristers and judges, "the pen" and "the sword" and "the press" for the members of the professions who use them, only when we are thinking of them as members of those professions. "This is the unanimous opinion of the bench" is a legitimate phrase; but it would be an absurd affectation to say, "I invited a large portion of the bar to dinner."

III. Figures founded on Contrast—

1. **Antithesis.**—Our natural love of variety or surprise is illustrated by the frequent recurrence in literature of this figure or mode of expression, whereby things belonging to the same general class, but with some marked feature of difference, are brought into sudden opposition. Thus we contrast "life and death," "heat and cold," "youth and age," "peace and war," or speak of the range of an author's style, "from gay to grave, from lively to severe"; or of unexpected events in the phrase, "Great results from

little causes spring," or of a contrast between quantity and time, "*Ten thousand* ministers were driven from their manses in *one* day." A judiciously-chosen contrast is an agreeable surprise; its effect is that of a strong light and shade, or a quick change in a scene. Antitheses often combine a double opposition—that of sound and of sense—and containing in themselves a rise and fall, are frequently used to supply the place of a period; *e.g.*—

"Every man desires to live long: but no one would be old."

"I am too proud to be vain."

"Spes et præmia in ambiguo, certa funera et luctus."

"Præsens imperfectum; plusquam-perfectum futurum."

When sufficiently sharp Antitheses become **Epigrams.** These exhibit a real sequence under an apparent contradiction, or startle by some surprise.

"The statues of Brutus and Cassius were conspicuous by their absence."

"The child is father to the man."

"The more hurry the less speed."

"He was so good, he was good for nothing."

"An educated man should know something of everything and everything of something."

"Verbosity is cured by a large vocabulary."

"He was of rich *but* honest parents."

"To the wisest and best of men I dedicate these volumes. Those for whom it is intended will accept and receive the compliment; those for whom it is not will do the same."

Long descriptions of character, as Dryden's "Zimri" and Pope's "Atticus," often hang on Antitheses; *e.g.*—

"Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
Bear like the Turk no brother near the throne;
View him with scornful yet with jealous eyes,
And hate for arts that caused himself to rise;

Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer;
Willing to wound and yet afraid to strike,
Just hint a fault and hesitate dislike;
Alike reserved to blame or to commend,
A timorous foe and a suspicious friend;
Dreading e'en fools, by flatterers besieged,
And so obliging that he ne'er obliged:
. . . . . .
Who would not smile, if such a man there be,
Who would not weep, if Atticus were he."

Whole novels and dramas sometimes depend for much of their interest on a similar opposition of semblance and reality. Thus we may contrast the confidence of Macbeth in the juggling oracles with their real interpretation, or note the juxtaposition of Shakespeare's Hamlet and Horatio, of Cervantes' Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.

The legitimate, that is, the temperate use of Antitheses on appropriate occasions, undoubtedly adds to the vigour of style; but, as everything in the world has something opposed to it, this form of expression is, from its very facility, apt to be abused. Sydney Smith has parodied the antithetical style in the following sentence from an imaginary review—

"They have profundity without obscurity, perspicuity without prolixity, ornament without glare, terseness without barrenness, penetration without subtilty, comprehensiveness without digression, and a great number of other things without a great number of other things."

Mere verbal oppositions, as in "The Two Gentlemen of Verona"—"Nay, I was taken up for laying them down"—are apt to degenerate into poor puns; and in more serious matters we are often tempted to overstate the truth for the sake of the antithesis; *e.g.*—

"All public praise is private friendship; all public

detraction is private hate." Frequent examples of this are to be found in the works of Lord Macaulay and of Pope, as in the line on Bacon—

"The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind."

But the excess itself into which some writers have fallen is an evidence of the emphasis which Antitheses are calculated to give to expression. Their merit lies in their condensation, and their affording to the mind a distinct resting-place in the sentence. Their danger is their tendency to pervert facts by overstatement and neglect of modifying circumstances. When they follow each other too fast, they are apt to produce a jerky style: the writer who leaps from one to another is like an opera-dancer posing in artificial attitudes.

2. The **Hyperbole**, which concentrates the attention on some single feature and exaggerates it, also appeals to our love of surprise. The statement it makes is in contrast to our ordinary experience and the usual course of nature. It is admissible in passionate description, as when we speak of "rivers of blood," or Milton writes of Satan, "Hell grew darker at his frown," or makes him exclaim "Myself am Hell," or it is said of lean cattle "Vix ossibus hærent." It is common in the exaggerations on which certain forms of humour—notably that most familiar in America, and frequently illustrated in the works of Sydney Smith and Charles Lamb—largely rely.

Note that hyperbolical writing may either be deliberate burlesque as in these authors, or a feature of an exaggerated style as frequently in the works of Victor Hugo. The judicious use of the hyperbole requires considerable skill. In the hands of unpractised writers it is apt to become merely bombastic or nonsensical. It may be introduced as a parody, *e.g.*, in the player's speech, "Hamlet," Act II, sc. 2, or with dramatic propriety to indicate an excited state of mind, as in Hamlet's challenges over the grave of Ophelia.

3. **Irony** *and Insinuation or Innuendo* are other forms under the same head, where satire is veiled under the guise of a compliment, or obscurely, because incompletely, expressed. The writings of Swift, of Junius, and of Heine abound in these, *e.g.*—

"The minister generally remains in office till a worse can be found."

"I shall believe it to be so, though I happen to find it in his lordship's history."

"To cleanse the Theatre is harder than to cleanse the Augean stables, for in this case the oxen are in the stalls."

Modern abuse is frequently ironical—

"He is full of information, like yesterday's Times.

"He did his party all the harm in his power, he spoke for it."

The *Euphemism* by which bad or dangerous things are spoken of in gracious terms—as the Greek fashion of addressing the Furies as the Eumenides, is a form of polite irony. In a like fashion we say death is "parting" or "falling asleep." Similarly, a disgraceful bankruptcy is referred to as "stopping payment," &c.

N.B.—Distinguish Euphemism from *Euphuism*, an affected mode of writing, marked by the use of fine words and the abuse of antithesis, which was a fashion of the Elizabethan age.

The same half-decorous obscurity often refines the edge of an oratorical *Retort; e.g.*—

A nobleman had said that Providence had inflicted on Mr. B. a disease of the brain as a penalty for the misuse of his faculties. Mr. B. replied, "It may be so; but, in any case, it will be some consolation to the friends and family of the noble lord to know that the disease is one which even Providence could not inflict upon him."

"His ancestors came over with the Conqueror. I never heard that they did anything else."

"I hope he thought he was speaking the truth: but he is rather a dull man and liable to make blunders."

IV. Miscellaneous Figures—

The following names are given to modifications of the above, or to other figures less generally used and not reducible to a distinct head:—

1. *Interrogation* is an animated form of address somewhat similar to apostrophe. Conspicuous examples are found in the Scriptures, as:—

"Your fathers, where are they? And did the prophets live for ever?"

"Hath he said it and shall he not do it?"

Compare the famous passage in Demosthenes beginning, "Is Philip sick?" or Cicero's appeal, "How long, O Cataline, will you abuse our patience?"

2. *Exclamation* is a yet more passionate address, *e.g.*—

"Heu Pietas, Heu prisca Fides!"

"Oh, what a revolution! and what a heart must I have, to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall!"

3. *Vision* is a vivid use of the present tense applied to past or future events, or to absent objects, *e.g.*—

"I seem to myself to behold this city, the ornament of the earth, and the capital of all nations suddenly involved in one conflagration." Compare Byron's animation of the statue in the Capitol—

"I see before me the gladiator lie,"

or the close of Macaulay's second Essay on Lord Chatham.

4. *Prolepsis*, or Anticipation, is a figure by which future events are spoken of as if they had already happened, as in Milton's reference to Adam and Eve—

"The loveliest pair
That ever *since* in love's embraces met."

or these lines in Keats' *Pot of Basil*—

> "So the two brothers with *their murdered man*
> Rode past fair Florence,"

where "murdered man" stands for "the man they were about to kill," or in the exclamation of Isabella in *Measure for Measure*, "I *had* a brother then," meaning my brother is doomed to die.

Another noticeable use of the Past is in such an expression as—

> "*Fuimus* Troes, fuit Ilium et ingens
> Gloria Teucrorum,"

meaning "Troy is no more."

5. *Metalepsis* is applied in Rhetoric to playing on one word in different senses. See any of the punning passages in Shakespeare.

6. *Asyndeton* is etymologically applied to a succession of assertions unconnected by any conjunction: its force depends on its abridging the time that must have elapsed in a series of events. "Veni, Vidi, Vici" is an example; so the following, "The enemy said: I will pursue; I will overtake; I will divide the spoil, . . . my hand shall destroy them; thou blewest with thy breath; the sea covered them:" where each clause sums up matter for paragraphs.

7. *Aposiopesis* is a breaking off in the middle of a sentence, leaving the suppressed sentiment or statement to be understood; *e.g.*—

"Quos ego—sed motos præstat componere fluctus."

"It pleased the Almighty to give us in their stead —I know not what—Our enemies will tell the rest."

Correction is another form of the same kind, but here we generally strengthen a previous statement.

"All these families were ruined—ruined did I say? they were utterly undone."

8. *Catachresis* is a term applied to words used in a sense obviously different from that naturally belonging

to them, as when we speak of a "*high* man" for a "tall man," "A voice *beautiful* to the ear," "A face *melodious* to the eye," or use such phrases as "*Altum* mare," "That thy days may be *long* in the land." Catachresis is a violent and rarely justifiable metaphor.

As a rule young writers ought to be chary of using figures of speech. They ought never to be *sought for*, or *manufactured*, or *thrust into* discourse. They ought to *grow* naturally out of the writers' thought. Plain narrative requires few metaphors, lively description admits of more, the passion of the orator and the fancy of the poet indulge in most.

CHAPTER II.

NUMBER OF WORDS.

THE same rule applies to Force as to Perspicuity of Style. Whatever we have to say the more briefly it is said the greater, with few exceptions, is the energy of our expression. Concentration of phrase is like a burning glass, which adds to the brightness and the heat of the rays it gathers into a focus. The same sentiment which diffused over several paragraphs will appear as a platitude, when condensed into a sentence will seem original. Contrast, "Shakespeare is the most universal genius the world ever saw: he is equally at home in tragedy, comedy, and history," with Hazlitt's epigram, "Shakespeare's characteristic is everything."

We have spoken of Tautology as a transgression of Perspicuity. In the following it is an offence against our time and patience—

"The dawn is overcast, the morning lowers,
And heavily, in clouds, brings in the day."

"The glories of proud London to survey,
The sun himself shall rise, at break of day."

Almost every page in the work of weak writers

illustrates a similar defect. They beat the ingot of the thinker into a volume of gold leaves of commentary. Those who write against time are persistently verbose. Their paraphrastic style has been compared to a torpedo, which benumbs everything it touches: but it requires some education to feel its offensiveness.

The object of a strong writer is to attain his end at the least cost of brain to the hearer, and he will endeavour to cast out every unnecessary word, *e.g.*—instead of saying "Being content with deserving a triumph, he refused it," he will write "Content with deserving, &c.," for "There is nothing which disgusts us sooner than the empty pomp of language," he will say "Nothing disgusts us sooner, &c."

In order to attain the terse, concise style almost everywhere associated with strength, the following rules are worthy of note:—

(*a*) Use no unnecessary adjectives, rather employ nouns that are self-sufficient: *e.g.*—"murder" instead of "a planned homicide."

An *exception* occurs when in addressing a popular audience it is desirable to unfold the full meaning of what is implied in the noun, as when an advocate speaks to a jury of a "cool, deliberate, premeditated murder."

(*b*) Use suggestive adjectives, leaving as much as may safely be left to the imagination of the reader. Pope's epigrammatic line on Atossa has often been quoted to illustrate this—

> "From loveless youth to unrespected age
> No passion gratified except her rage."

It implies "from youth, when if ever she should have enlisted love, to age, when if ever she should have commanded respect."

(*c*) Similarly, as far as is consistent with good grammar and clearness, suppress whatever can be readily

supplied. This form of brevity is especially adapted to precepts, as in Paradise Lost:—

"Nor love thy life, nor hate; but what thou liv'st
Live well; how long or short permit to Heaven."

And to epitaphs, as this, by Sir H. Wotton:

"He first deceased; she for a little tried
To live without him, liked it not and died."

But the excess of this aphoristic and antithetic style is apt to become obscure; or, as frequently even in Bacon's essays, disjointed.

(*d*) Reduce, as far as possible, the number of auxiliaries; *e.g.*, it is better to say, "If Thou hadst been here my brother *had* not died," than "my brother would not have died." Poetry has a further license in this respect, as when "Long *die* thy happy days before thy death," stands for "May your happiness cease long before your life ceases;" *i.e.*, "May you live long and miserably."

An *exception* occurs when the auxiliary is emphatic —"I doubt whether he went." The proper affirmative answer is "he *did* go," not "he went."

(*e*) Avoid indirect or prefaced modes of expression, except when they are emphatic as "*It was I* who did it." "*There* appeared to them a strange vision."

(*f*) Avoid an accumulation of little words. The luggage of particles is an impediment to strong speech and a jar in the harmony of style; *e.g.*—"*Now as that we may love* God it is necessary to know Him, *so that we may know* God it is necessary to study His works." Write, "As to love God we must know Him, to know Him we must study His works."

Especially shun the frequent repetition of conjunctions and of pronouns. The shortness of the Latin "Veni, vidi, vici" is in this respect seldom attainable, but we should aim after it as far as is consistent with the idiom of our language. "I came, saw, conquered."

The following, from Tillotson, is a "reductio ad absurdum" of the common reckless use of "and" with other tautologies:—

"He forgave His enemies all their ill-will towards Him *and* all their vile *and* malicious usage of Him: most remarkably at His death, when the provocations were greater *and* most violent, when they fell thick *and* in storms upon Him, *and* when they were more grievous *and* pressing in the agony *and* anguish of His suffering. In these hard *and* pressing circumstances He was so far from breathing out threatening *and* revenge that He did declare His free forgiveness of them *and* perfect charity towards them."

Precisely the same sense may be conveyed thus:—

"He forgave His enemies all their ill-will and malignant usage. Even at His death when their assaults came upon Him in violent storms, and pressed more grievously on His agony, far from breathing out revenge, He declared to them His forgiveness and perfect charity."

Whenever the circumstances follow one another quickly, or in a mass, it is better to omit the "and." Thus—

"So strength first made a way,
Then beauty flowed, then wisdom, honour, pleasure."

But when each particular is so emphasized that a pause is proper before it, the "and" or other conjunction should be repeated, thus—

"While the earth remaineth seed-time *and* harvest *and* cold *and* heat *and* summer *and* winter *and* day *and* night shall not cease."

"Such a man would fall a victim to power, but truth *and* reason *and* liberty would fall with him."

"For I am persuaded that neither death, *nor* life, *nor* angels, *nor* principalities, *nor* powers, *nor* things present, *nor* things to come, *nor* height, *nor* depth, *nor* any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God."

An emphatic consequence is properly introduced by *and*. We do not say "the wind passing," or when the wind passes, "it is gone," but, "The wind passeth over it, *and* it is gone." Similarly with pronouns. In ordinary narrative they should be repeated only when necessary for the sake of clearness, but the same pronoun is often repeated for emphasis—

"*He* suggested the scheme; *he* urged its execution; *he* carried it into effect."

"*Te* dulcis conjux, *te* solo in littore secum,
Te veniente die, *te* decedente canebat."

(*g*) Do not search about for tropes, but use them when they convey the idea in shorter space and therefore more vividly than ordinary language would have done; *e.g.*—

"He has shed the blood of war in peace" is forcibly terse for "He has shed in time of peace as much blood as might have been shed in time of war."

"They devour widows' houses" for "consume the support of widows' houses."

In order to reconcile clearness with conciseness a good writer will often have recourse to *repetition*. The iteration of a word or phrase frequently adds to the force of a rhetorical argument or poetical apostrophe, as in the following elegiac passage:—

"By foreign hands the dying eyes were closed,
By foreign hands thy decent limbs composed,
By foreign hands thy humble grave adorned,
By strangers honoured and by strangers mourned."

With this we may compare the repetition of "fallen" in Dryden's "Alexander's Feast"; or of "drifting" in Longfellow's "Seaweed."

In these instances there is no *verbosity*; for the writer is not flapping wings in the air, but striking blows on the anvil.

A master of style will not crowd too many thoughts or cram many references into the same page; he will

aim at *suggestiveness*, setting the reader's mind into the right track and giving it an impulse in the desired direction. He will carefully study the arrangement of his sentences.

CHAPTER III.

ORDER OF WORDS.

RHETORICAL considerations frequently permit and sometimes enjoin a departure from the ordinary rules of sequence in prose. As far as is consistent with good grammar and perspicuity, we should endeavour to "arrange the elements of a proposition in the order in which the ideas represented by them naturally suggest themselves to the mind." The disposition of words in a sentence should be like those of figures in a picture, the most important should occupy the chief places.

The greatest advantage which an inflected possesses over an uninflected language is the greater freedom which the former enjoys in the disposal of its words. Inflections are as significant as attached numbers would be in indicating their reference. The ancients could therefore always set the most emphatic words in the most prominent positions, whereas we are often left to indicate their emphasis by the voice or by italics.

"Will you ride to town to-morrow?" might be written in Greek or Latin in five different ways. But even in English there is in this respect considerable latitude; and the temperate use of **Inversion** adds greatly to the precision as well as vigour of style. The following rules may be safely observed in animated prose, though they are of still more frequent use in poetry;—

1. When the *predicate* or *object* are much more impressive or mentally prominent than the *subject* they may with advantage precede it; *e.g.*—

"Great is Diana of the Ephesians" is preferable to "The Diana of the Ephesians is a great goddess" for, besides that the former rendering is more concise, "great" is the emphatic word. For the same reason the translation of the parable of the house is more effective in the authorized version of St. Matthew, "and great was the fall thereof," than in the corresponding version of St. Luke, "and the ruin of that house was great," so the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the peacemakers," or such phrases as "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Any special emphasis may justify inversion, as, "There appeared unto him Elias with Moses." It is frequently used to indicate a swift or abrupt action—"Up goes the fool, and gets sent down again."

Commands frequently assume this form and owe to it half their force; *e.g.*, "Go he shall." "Stay not here."

The license of arrangement allowed in poetry is employed to great advantage by the best writers; *e.g.*—

"Sweet is the breath of morn."

"Low she lies who blessed our eyes."

"The night winds sigh, the breakers roar,
And shrieks the wild sea mew."

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear."

"Never to mansions where the mighty rest
Since their foundations came a greater guest."

A conspicuous instance of the verb coming first is in "Julius Cæsar,"

"Then *burst* his mighty heart";

of the pronoun in Milton,

"*Me* though just right and the fixed laws of heaven
Did first create your leader."

Place the "me" after "create" and half the defiance of the fallen archangel disappears from the sentence.

The same loss of energy would be felt were the following to be reduced to the common order :—"*With these* [swords] we have acquired our liberties, and *with these* we will defend them."

2. The close, as well as the beginning, of a sentence being prominent may also draw to itself the emphatic word, which attracts the more attention from its position being unusual ; *e.g.*—

"Silver and gold have I *none*."

"All these have we *betrayed*."

"The wages of sin is *death*."

"Add to your faith *virtue*."

3. Therefore avoid concluding the sentence with a weak or insignificant word as a pronoun, adverb, or a preposition. The following are bad examples :—

"The Trinity is a mystery which we firmly believe the truth *of* and humbly adore the depth *of*."

"Envy is a vice that clever men are often guilty *of*."

"He drew his sword which he killed her *with*."

"I could not though I wished *to*."

In these cases the preposition is left, as it were, dangling in the air.

The following exceptions to the above rule should be noted :—

a. When the otherwise weak word is made strong by emphasis ; *e.g.*—

"In their prosperity my friends shall never hear of me, in their adversity *always*."

"Historians can seldom differ on a matter of fact without hating each other *personally*."

b. When the particle is attached to the verb so as practically to form a compound ; *e.g.*—

"There is no great harm in him that I *know of*."

"We have finished the work we have so long been *busy about*."

"It is this I wish to *clear up*."

c. When we wish to avoid a broken construction; *e.g.*—

"He arrived *at* and was ultimately confirmed *in* this decision;" rather write, "He arrived at this decision and was ultimately confirmed in it."

4. The same rule applies to circumstances or qualifying clauses. These may follow the main assertion when they are emphatic, as—

"His changes of opinion were rapid, to *say no worse*," insinuating that they were interested. But generally they should precede it, as the sheep go before the dogs. Of the three forms—

"This battle is decisive if the telegrams are correct,"

"This battle, if the telegrams are correct, is decisive,"

"If the telegrams are correct, this battle is decisive,"

prefer the last. This especially applies to adjective and conditional clauses; *e.g.*—

"Inebriated by self-conceit though he was, he at last found that he was addressing the air."

"If thou didst ever thy dear father love,
Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder."

When a number of circumstances are introduced it is desirable, especially in poetry, to introduce them first, and then to wind up with the principal verb and nominative. See the opening lines of *Paradise Lost*, B. II.—

"High on a throne, &c., Satan exalted sat":

Or those of Keat's *Hyperion*:—

"Deep in the shady sadness of a vale
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
Far from the fiery noon and Eve's one star
Sat grey-haired Saturn, quiet as a stone."

One advantage of this arrangement is that we know when the sentence is done. In loosely constructed clauses we are kept in suspense about the conclusion, and every fresh unexpected phrase is a mental jolt,

like an unexpected step on a stair in the dark. Dr. Campbell gives the following instance of this :—

"We came to our journey's end, at last, with no small difficulty, after much fatigue, through deep roads and bad weather," and proposes to read—"At last after much fatigue, through deep roads and bad weather, we came with no small difficulty to our journey's end." Mr. Spencer further reforms it thus:—"At last with no small difficulty and after much fatigue we came, through deep roads and bad weather, to our journey's end."

Disjointed sentences are frequent even in our standard writers; *e.g.*—

"However, many that do not read themselves are seduced by others that do; and thus become unbelievers upon trust, and at second hand; and this is too frequent a case."

In the following a host of details are jotted down as they occurred to the author without any attempt at arrangement—

"Last year a paper was brought here from England called a dialogue between the Archbishop of Canterbury and Mr. Higgins which we ordered to be burnt by the common hangman as it well deserved, though we have no more to do with his Grace of Canterbury than you have with the Archbishop of Dublin, whom you tamely suffer to be abused openly and by name by that paltry scoundrel of an observator: and lately upon an affair wherein he had no concern, I mean the business of the missionary of Drogheda wherein our excellent prelate was engaged and did nothing but according to law and discretion." A sentence like this deserves to be burnt by the common hangman.

Such constructions in the works of Dean Swift show the need of some canons by which to test even great composers, and raise the question how are we to reform loose sentences. They may be dealt with in one of two ways, either by breaking them up into a number of small sentences, or by recasting and throwing them into periods. According as we adopt

the one or the other of those methods, we shall fall into the one or the other of two **Styles**, the **Isolated** or the **Periodic.** The former has the advantage in clearness and facility, but in excess it wants dignity and music. A number of small sentences leaves the same paltry impression on a page that a number of small words does on a sentence. The frequent recurrence of long periods, on the other hand, suggests constraint; and when the form of our expression is more dignified than the thought, we may fairly be accused of pomposity.

In Dr. Johnson's works generally, and, though to a less degree, in Gibbon's History, the reader is fatigued by the length of the periods. Modern newspaper writers, on the other hand, are apt to fall into a clipped, jerky, and insignificant style.

A judicious alternation of long and short sentences will, *ceteris paribus*, make the best style. Composition has been defined as the art of varying well, and we should be able to exhibit variety in the disposition of our clauses as in the choice of our words. A page even of the smoothest verse made up of lines all pitched in the same key or balanced in the same rhythm seldom fails to be monotonous.

5. With regard to the arrangement of sentences in a **Paragraph**—to which on a larger scale the same laws apply as to the sentence—it may be remarked that the best effect is generally produced when the long sentence precedes and the short sentence follows, striking, as it were, the nail on the head, and concentrating the sentiment which has been previously amplified.

In the following passage from Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*, the mind is prepared by the foregoing illustrations to appreciate the summary at the close:—

"When the old feudal and chivalrous spirit of fealty, which by freeing kings from fear freed both kings and subjects from the precaution of tyranny, shall be extinct

in the minds of men, plots and assassinations will be anticipated by preventive murder and preventive confiscation, and that long roll of grim and bloody maxims which form the political code of all power not standing on its own honour and the honour of those who are to obey it. *Kings will be tyrants from policy when subjects are rebels from principle.*"

Sometimes a long array of descriptions is introduced to lead in some striking fact. This is a favourite fashion with Macaulay, whose genius for panoramic history has never been surpassed. See especially his account of the burial of the Duke of Monmouth in the cemetery of the Tower, where the deaths of his predecessors are recounted like a solemn roll of drums before the funeral, and the whole is clenched by the closing clause, "Such was the dust with which the dust of Monmouth mingled!"

6. Arrange the members of a sentence in an ascending scale. This method of passing from the common to the rare, from the ordinary to the wonderful, from the rule to the exception, from the known to the previously unimagined, is called **Climax**, a figure of arrangement depending for its force on the fact that the vividness with which the mind realizes a succession of images has much to do with the order in which they are presented to it. Among favourite instances of this figure in English may be mentioned the passage in "The Tempest," beginning, "The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces"; Macbeth's adjuration to the witches; Manfred's appeal to the shade of Astarte; Campbell's "Fall of Poland"; the description of Waterloo in "Childe Harold"; Thomson's "Hymn of the Seasons"; the battle in Scott's "Marmion"; the address of Satan to Beelzebub in "Paradise Lost," Book I, beginning, "All is not lost"; and Milton's lines on Death—

"Black it stood as Night,
Fierce as ten Furies, terrible as Hell."

The following terse climaxes are famous, among others, in Latin literature :—

"Abiit, excessit, evasit, erupit."

"Crudelis ubique
Luctus, ubique pavor et plurima mortis imago."

"Estne dei sedes, nisi terra et pontus et aer
Et cœlum et virtus? Superos quid quærimus ultra?
Jupiter est quodcunque vides, quocunque moveris."

Climax is to the emotional what a "Sorites" in Logic is to the intellectual part of our nature. We are led in the one by a subtle reasoner, in the other by an eloquent speaker, to assent to propositions which would have at first appeared too strong, but which we are brought by a succession of steps to regard as natural. The most remarkable instance of an oratorical Climax in English is the speech of Antony in Shakespeare, where it is employed along with Antithesis, so as to produce an overwhelming effect. Of more purely poetical Climax there is no finer example than the concluding lines of Coleridge's "Mont Blanc."

Anti-Climax, the comic converse of the above, depends for its effect on the same law as that which regulates Antithesis; but it is a more sudden fall, generally from a longer ascent. Anti-Climax is of three kinds :—

(*a*) The most frequent is *intentional burlesque.* This is a favourite form in the works of Byron and Hood. It gives much of their point to the "Rejected Addresses," "The Anti-Jacobin," "The Ingoldsby Legends." There are traces of it in almost every page of Pope's satires; *e.g.*—

"Go teach Eternal Wisdom how to rule,
Then drop into thyself and be a fool."

"Then flashed the living lightning from her eyes,
And screams of horror rent the affrighted skies;
Not louder shrieks to pitying Heaven are cast
When husbands or when lap-dogs breathe their last."

It is found in ironical epitaphs :—

> "Beneath this stone my wife doth lie,
> She's now at rest; and so am I."

And in mock sentiment :—

> "Lead us to some sunny isle
> Yonder o'er the western deep,
> Where the skies forever smile
> And the blacks forever weep."

(*b*) The second kind of Anti-Climax is serious throughout. It is an extended Antithesis with a sharp edge, of which the speech of Hamlet, beginning, "What a piece of work is man!" may serve as an example.

(*c*) The third is *unintentional burlesque* or *false climax*, frequent in the works, especially the verses, of bombastical writers :—

> "Alas! I see him pale, I hear his groans:
> He foams, he tears his hair, he raves, he bleeds;
> I know him by myself—*he dies distracted!*"

In panegyrics, as—

> "And thou, Dalhousie, the great god of war,
> Lieutenant-colonel to the Earl of Mar;"

and in epitaphs, as—

"Robert Boyle, the father of Chemistry and brother of the Earl of Cork."

"He was a devoted husband, an exemplary parent, an honest man, and a first-rate shot."

Note, however, we must distinguish from burlesque the mingling of humour and pathos so common in Richter, Byron, and Carlyle, where a familiar phrase is introduced to dispel the suspicion of sentimentalism; *e.g.*—

"Those hues of gold and azure, that hush of expectation as day died, were still a Hebrew speech for me; nevertheless I was looking at the fair illuminated letters, and had an eye for the gilding."

PART V.

VERSIFICATION.

Verse is a particular arrangement of words in reference to their sounds. The sounds of the syllables which make up words may be regarded:—

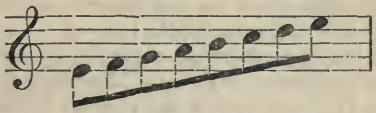
1. By themselves (*a*) As to Quality or Height of Tone.
(*b*) As to Quantity or Length of Time.
(*c*) As to Accent or Stress of Voice.

2. In their relation to other sounds; and this may be:—
(*a*) A relation of succession, *i.e.*, Rhythm.
(*b*) A relation of consonance, *i.e.*, Rhyme.

I.

The distinctions under the first head may be illustrated by a reference to the common musical stave.

(A) **Quality or Height.**—The position of the notes, up or down on the scale, indicate various degrees of shrillness or gravity in the sounds, which may be conveyed by the instrument or by the human voice in singing.



The variety in the sounds of the vowels, in reading or speaking, is greater than our five characters **a e i o u** seem to indicate, and is analogous to the ascent or descent of the notes.

A judicious choice and arrangement of the vowel

sounds is an important element in the music of all verse—*e.g.*, in the following, full low tones predominate:—

> "The splendour falls on castle walls,
> And snowy summits old in story;
> The long light shakes across the lakes,
> And the wild cataract leaps in glory."

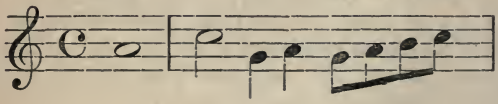
In the following, high shrill tones:—

> "O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,
> And thinner, clearer, farther going!
> O sweet and far from cliff and scar,
> The horns of Elfland faintly blowing."

The time is the same, the accents are the same, the metre is the same, but there is a whole octave between the two sets of notes.

The Quality or Height of the syllables has nowhere been adopted as a basis of versification.

(B) The **Quantity** of a sound or syllable is the length of time we dwell upon it. In music it is indicated by the amount of the bar occupied by a note.



In simple common time the longest note—*i.e.*, the Semibreve—occupies the whole bar—A.

The bar may be otherwise occupied by any equivalent of the Semibreve—*e.g.*, by 2 Minims, 4 Crotchets, 8 Quavers, 16 Semiquavers, &c.; or by 1 Minim + 2 Crotchets + 4 Quavers, as in B.

The range of time possible to the voice in singing is nearly as great. That of the voice in reading or speaking is considerable, but more limited. Where verse, as in Greek and Latin, depends on the Quantity

of Syllables they are theoretically regarded as either *long* or *short*, the long syllable being assumed to have twice the quantity or length of the short, *e.g.*—

— — = — ⏑ ⏑; ⏑ — ⏑ — = — — —.

Quantity in English may vary indefinitely. It depends on the length of the vowels. A short vowel is not made longer by position. A double consonant following tends rather to shorten the vowel as in *smīte smĭtten*, *chīd chĭdden*, &c. Difference of quantity makes a very perceptible difference in the flow of English verses. To illustrate this, Dr. Guest contrasts the following:—

(*a*) *Short vowels predominant.*

"Thĕ bŭsy rĭvŭlĕt ĭn hūmblĕ vālleȳ
Slĭppĕth ăwāy in hăppinēss; ĭt ĕvĕr
Hŭrrĭĕth ŏn, ă sōlĭtūdĕ ăroūnd, bŭt
Hĕavĕn ăbŏve ĭt."

(*b*) *Long vowels predominant.*

"Thĕ lōnely tārn thăt slēeps ŭpŏn thĕ mōuntaīn,
Brēathĭng ă hōly cālm ăroūnd, drīnks ĕvĕr
Of thĕ grēat prēsēnce, ēvĕn ĭn ĭts slūmbĕr,
Dēeply rĕjoīcĭng."

The verses are otherwise the same, they have exactly the same number of syllables; and, in the main, the same disposition of accents, but they make very different impressions on the ear. This is the effect of quantity. A more familiar instance of the same difference may be found on comparing almost any verse of Milton's "L'Allegro" with most any verse of his "Il Penseroso," *e.g.*—

(*a*) Short Quantity—

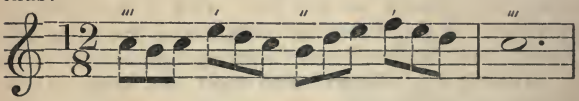
"Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful Jollity,
Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,
Nods and becks and wreathed smiles."

(*b*) Long Quantity—

> "Come, pensive Nun, devout and pure,
> Sober, steadfast, and demure,
> All in a robe of darkest grain,
> Flowing with majestic train,
> And stable stole of cyprus lawn,
> Over thy decent shoulders drawn."

But though Quantity thus affects its flow and modifies its impression, English verse does not depend upon Quantity. Beyond the occasional license of contracting two short syllables, *e.g.* spĭrĭt, into one, and the general injunction to preserve the accord of sense and sound, the rules of our Prosody take no account of Quantity.

(C) **Accent** is the stress which is thrown upon the pronunciation of a syllable. Accents have been divided into the acute ´, the grave `, and the circumflex ˆ; but the last is not in use in English, and the grave is practically equivalent to an absence of accent. An accented syllable is one with the acute accent; others are commonly said to be unaccented. The chief accent or stress in music falls upon the first note of the bar, other accents may follow, according to definite laws. Special accentuation is sometimes indicated by the signs >, or ∧, above the note. The ordinary accentuation, with its various degrees of stress and relation to the unaccented notes, may be indicated thus:—



Accent, though the acute more frequently falls on long than on short syllables, has no necessary connection with quantity; the former may be like a short sharp blow as distinguished from a lingering touch. It has no connection with quality, height, or pitch of sound.

A long or a short syllable in Greek τίμιος φίλος; or in Latin "prímus," "cáno"; or in English "chéap," "chíp," may equally have the acute accent. Similarly a syllable undoubtedly long may have no accent; *e.g.*, "*Our* thoúghts, as boundless, ánd *our* soúls as free."

Note, however, that accent tends to lengthen the quantity, and that it is a defect to let the accent, as in the above line, fall on so insignificant a word as "and." We say lóvely, not lōvelý, &c.

The same syllables preserving the same quantity may in English change their accents, as, "Not all bláck bírds are bláckbirds."

Note also that while accent tends to make a syllable loud, it is not exactly synonymous with *loudness*: the former referring to the sharpness of the stroke, the latter to the volume of voice expended.

Accent may vary in degree, *e.g.* in the line

"Swéet are the úses of advérsity"

there is a stronger accent on "sweet" than on any other word. When two emphatic syllables follow one another, more stress is laid on the one than on the other, and that on which greater stress is laid is generally regarded as the sole accented syllable. Two consecutive syllables can, however, be equally accented by making a pause between them—as in the line,

"Virtue, beauty, and speech did strike—wound—
charm."

II.

A. **Rhythm** (ῥυθμός, a measured motion) in its widest sense applied to any symmetry of parts, as the arrangement of stones in a building or movements in a dance, is with us restricted to mean a harmonious succession of sounds, and especially that definite succession which constitutes verse. The Greeks and Romans made Time the basis of their verse. All other European nations have rested it upon Accent.

In Greek and Latin lines we have both quantity and accent :—

Ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε Μοῦσα πολύτροπον ὅς μάλα πολλὰ;

Árma vírumque cáno Trojǽ qui prímus ab óris;

but in these the sum total of the quantities is fixed, that of the accents not. Classical poetry may have been, in some manner not now understood, affected by Accent, but it is regulated by Quantity. Latin and Greek verse is a regular recurrence of quantities. English verse, on the other hand, though modified as we have seen by quantity, is a more or less regular succession of accents within the compass in each line of a more or less definite number of syllables.

The elements of verse are the syllable, the foot, and the line.

A Syllable has been defined as a collection of letters formed by one impulse of the breath. The letters of a syllable may be fairly said to form a single sound, although not necessarily a simple one. Every syllable must have at least one vowel. Two vowels coming together are often pronounced as one, even where they do not form one of the usual diphthongs; *e.g.* man*sion*, na*tion*. Similarly "heaven" and "prayer" are commonly regarded as monosyllables. Poetry often assumes the license of expanding these and others; *e.g.*, "As that the air, the earth or ocëan"; and an opposite license of contracting dissyllables, *e.g.*—

"Of great *Messiah* shall sing."

"You taught me language, and my profit *on't*
Is I know how to curse."

"Though real friends I *b'lieve* are few."

But this liberty should be sparingly indulged, for it is apt to be abused.

A foot is a syllable or a succession of two or more syllables, one of which must be accented, assumed as the basis of the line.

Monosyllabic feet are rare, but they seem to occur in English in such lines as the following—

"Tóll | fòr thè bráve."

"Stáy | the kíng has thrówn his wárder dówn."

The feet commonly used in our verse are dissyllabic or trisyllabic. Observe that in applying to them, as is customary, the names of the classic feet, we take an English *accented* as the equivalent of a Greek or Latin *long* syllable, an *unaccented* as the equivalent of a *short* syllable; *e.g.*—

DISSYLLABLES.

Iambus, . .	(*Lat.*, ⏑ –)	*Eng.*,	rètúrn.
Trochee, . .	(„ – ⏑)	„	réspìte.
Spondee, . .	(„ – –)	„	súnbéam.

TRISYLLABLES.

Dactyl, .	(*Lat.*, – ⏑ ⏑)	*Eng.*,	mérrìlỳ.
Amphibrach,	(„ ⏑ – ⏑)	„	rècéivìng.
Anapæst, .	(„ ⏑ ⏑ –)	„	còlònnáde.

A line is a succession or combination of feet, generally containing a fixed number of syllables—an exception occurs when two unaccented take the place of one accented—and having, as a rule, a regular recurrence of accents.

The disposition of the **Accent** being the most important point in the regulation and scansion of the line, the following rules should be borne in mind :—

(*a*) Avoid letting it fall on a syllable on which it would not fall in prose, *i.e.*, let the verse accent fall on the natural accent of the word. The following from Spenser violates this rule—

"Flesh may ímpair, quoth she, but reason can répair."

So this—

"And the whispéring sound of the cool colonnade."

(*b*) Accent the root and not the termination; *e.g.*, lóver, not lovér.

(*c*) Accent the most important part of a compound—thráldom, not thraldóm; mischánce, not míschance.

(*d*) Do not let the accent rest on a particle, as "and," "the," "on," "in," &c. This rule is violated in the following—

"Upón the floor the fresh plucked roses fell."

(*e*) Nor conspicuously on a pronoun, as "that," "this," unless where the sense gives to the pronoun an unusual emphasis; *e.g.*—

"Richard is Richard, that is *I* am *I*."

(*f*) The same rule applies to adjectives and adverbs and auxiliaries, and is liable to the same exception; *e.g.*—

"Lest the gréat Pan dó awake."

English verse is also affected by **the Pause.**

Besides the rest of the voice natural at the close, there is in the course of every line, unless it be very short, another pause more or less marked, the position of which affects the rhythm. The following are examples of the varieties of cadence thus introduced—

"Swéet | are the uses of adversity."
"But lőok | the morn in russet mantle clad."
"I know a bőank | whereon the wild thyme grows."
"Round broken cőlumns | clasping ivy twined."
"Those seats of lúxury | debate and pride."
"The quality of mőercy | is not strained."

This Pause is preceded by a syllable, either immediately as in the first three, or with an interval as in the last three examples, which is more strongly accented than any other in the line. This special, or

line accent, gives a key-note to the rhythm, and corresponds to the stress laid upon the first note of the musical bar. Rarely the strongest accent is quite separate from the Pause.

"Flíng but a stone | the giant dies."

Emphasis is the result of accent or pause or both combined, and in the last case it is strongest.

[It is essential to good poetry to let the rhythm emphasis fall on the chief part of an emphatic word.]

When the Pause cuts a word in two, *e.g.*,

"Clime of the un|forgotten brave,"

it is properly called a **Cæsura.** The term has been with less propriety extended to all medial Pauses.

Note that where there are several pauses in a line, one should be more marked than the others; *e.g.*—

"Glows | where he reads || but trembles | as he writes."

"Reason | the card || but passion | is the gale."

Where the pauses are equipollent the effect is unpleasing to the ear; *e.g.*—

"Outstretched he lay || on the cold ground || and oft
Looked up to heaven."

In irregular verses the pause may sometimes take the place of a syllable; *e.g.*—

"Spreads his | light wings || and | in a mom|ent flies."

"Òfféndhèr || and | she knows | not to | forgive.
Òblíge hèr || and | she'll hate | you while | you live."

More than two unaccented syllables rarely come together in English, *e.g.*,—In "merrily" every syllable is short, but the first is accented. It would be a Tribrach in Latin, it is an English Dactyl. Two accented syllables rarely come together; but such

words as "sunbeam," "moonbeam," are used as spondees, and by the help of the Pause blank verse can be made spondaic.

B. **Rhyme.**—In all verse regulated by accent the consonance or similarity of sound in syllables plays an important part, as it gives greater force to the accents, especially to the last accents in the line.

The source of English rhyme is uncertain, some referring it to the popular Latin of the lower Empire, others to the Arabic, others to the Welsh or the Scandinavian. It first appeared in our verse towards the close of the tenth century.

I. **Terminal Rhyme**, or the standard rhyme of English poetry, is a resemblance of sound in the last syllable or syllables of successive or proximate lines.

It is either *Single*, *Double*, or *Triple*.

The rules of *Single* Rhyme are as follows :—

(*a*) The last vowel sounds must be identical and the preceding consonants must be different—

"If she seem not fair to *me*,
How care I how fair she *be*." (Assonantal rhyme.)

(*b*) When consonants follow the last vowels, these consonants must be identical in sound.

"What though his mighty soul his grief con*tains*,
He meditates revenge who least com*plains*."

(*c*) Rhyming syllables must have the strong accent. Weak terminations such as "ty," "ly," "ing," should not be made to bear the weight of the single rhyme.

In *Double Rhyme* only the first in each pair of chiming syllables must be accented.

"The meeting points the sacred hair diss*éver*
From the fair head for ever and for *éver*."

"Blow bugle, blow, set the wild echoes *flýing*,
And answer, echoes answer, dying, dying, *dýing*."

In *Triple Rhyme* the last two syllables are unaccented. The accented syllable strikes the chime,

the others follow like fainter reverberations. Triple rhymes are frequent in German and Italian poetry. In English they are less so, and, giving an air of levity to the verse, they are generally vehicles of humour; *e.g.*—

"Kings may be blest, but Tam was *glórious*,
O'er a' the ills o' life *victórious*."

"O ye lords of ladies intel*lectual*,
Inform us truly have they not hen*pecked you all*."

Bad Rhymes, of frequent occurrence, are mainly due to the following errors:—

1. *Violations of Rule* (*a*) are of two kinds—

(*α*) When the preceding consonants are the same, as "a*mid*" and "pyra*mid*," "*light*" and "satel*lite*," "*maid*" and "*made*."

On the same ground double rhymes like *minion* and *dominion* are objectionable.

These *identical* are sometimes called *perfect* rhymes, but the term is in our language misleading. In French they are admissible, and they are found in Chaucer—

"The holy blissful martir for to *seeke*,
That hem hath holpen what that they were *seeke*."

"*Away*" and "*sway*," "*strain*" and "*drain*" are fair rhymes, as the different letters before the *w* and *r* distinguish the sound.

(*β*) When the final sounds approximate without being identical. The following are typical bad rhymes—

"In the fat age of pleasure, wealth, and *ease*,
Sprung the rank weed and thrived with large in*crease*."

"Or, like the snow-falls in the *river*,
A moment white—then melts for*ever*."

"Soft o'er the shrouds ærial whispers *breathe*,
Which seem but zephyrs to the brain be*neath*."

Note, "*y*" should rhyme with *ie*, not with *ee*—the plural *ies* with *lies*, not with *fees*.

2. Rule (*b*) is never violated in English; in Spanish verse, such partial consonances as "carid*ad*" "bilb*ar*," are occasionally found.

3. Rule (*c*) is frequently set aside in rhyming such words as "levity," "brightly," with *ie* or *ee*, in lengthening the last syllable of a dactyl, or emphasizing unemphatic words; *e.g.*—

> "Seeking amid those untaught fores*ters*,
> If I would find one form resembling *hers*."

In the following couplets Rules *a* and *c* are both broken—

> "We might be otherwise—we might be *all*—
> We dream of, happy, high, majest*ical*."
>
> "And I could wish my days to *be*,
> Bound each to each by natural pi*ety*."

The most scandalous rhyme is where a word is cut in two at the end of the line, and the half made to chime with one preceding; *e.g.*—

> "And some in *file*
> Stand spelling false till one might walk to *Mile*
> End Green."

As a rule, **never alter the natural pronunciation** of a word for the sake of a rhyme. Some latitude, however, is in this respect granted to burlesque. Butler luxuriates in bad rhymes, and makes them causes of laughter; *e.g.*—

> "Just so romances are, for *what else*
> Is in them all but love and *battles*."
>
> "There was an ancient sage phi*losopher*
> Who had read Alexander *Ross over*."

Similarly, Swift, in a manner not to be imitated—

> "But as to comic Arist*ophanes*
> The rogue too vicious or too pr*ophane is*."

II. **Middle Rhyme.** Consonances not unfrequently occur within a single line, and have generally the effect of quickening the measure; *e.g.*—

"And ice mast-*high* came floating *by*."

"I bring fresh *showers* for the thirsting *flowers*."

"To the *fame* of your *name*."

When the rhyme falls in one half of the verse it is called *sectional;* it is generally in the first half; *e.g.*—

"In *fight* and *flight*, nigh all their host was slain."

"*Lightly* and *brightly* breaks away,
The morning from her mantle grey."

"And *will you*, *nill you*, I will marry you."

Sometimes the rhymes are only approximate; *e.g.*—

"Her *look* was *like* the morning star."

The term *Inverse Rhyme* has been applied with doubtful propriety to the repetition of the same word or part of a word within the line. This is a frequent form in the poems of Burns where it is commonly used, as elsewhere in prose, to add to the emphasis; *e.g.*—

"The piper *loud* and *louder* blew,
The dancers *quick* and *quicker* flew."

"And art thou *gone*, and *gone* forever."

In other cases the repetition is made to serve the purpose of an implied argument—

"But thou art *good*, and *good*ness still
Delighteth to forgive."

III. **Alliteration.**—Rhyme in the wide sense of consonance includes the fashion of beginning two or more of the words in a line with the same letter. It was a favourite practice of the Latin poets, especially Lucretius. Anglo-Saxon verse is to some extent based on Alliteration; it being applied to two syllables, at

least in every couplet: and generally to three or more; *e.g.*—

> "Éadward kinge, éngla hlaford
> Sénde sófæste sówle to criste."

Almost all English poetry before the time of Chaucer relies largely on the same principle. See the opening lines of Piers Ploughman:—

> "In a somer season,
> Whan softe was the sonne," &c.

After the close of the fourteenth century it ceased to be a rule of our verse, but Alliteration is of constant occurrence in Spenser. Along with antithesis, it was the main feature of the Elizabethan Euphuism, but slightly parodied by Shakespeare in the line—

> "The preyful princess pierced and pricked a pretty pleasing pricket."

Pope employs it to add to the effect of his elaborate Onomatopeia—

> "Up the high hill he heaves a huge round stone."

Nearly a century later it was turned to similar purpose by Campbell—

> "But see! mid the fast-flashing lightnings of war,
> What steed to the desert flies frantic and far."

It is conspicuous in the most musical stanza of Leyden—

> How sweetly swell on Jura's heath
> The murmurs of the mountain bee!
> How sweetly mourns the wreathed shell
> Of Jura's shore, its parent sea.

Shelley affected alliteration almost to excess—

> "Like a glowworm golden
> In a dell of dew,"

and his lyrical successor, the chief poet of his generation in our language, relies on it almost as much as on rhyme; *e.g.*—

"When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,
The mother of months in meadow or plain
Fills the shadows and windy places
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain."

Like antithesis, alliteration may be abused, as it is in the line "Let lovely lilacs line Lee's lonely lane," but its use in popular proverbs, as "Watch and Ward," "Waste not, Want not," "Meddle and Muddle," &c., bears testimony to its naturalness.

ENGLISH METRES.

THE term **Metre** or Measure is applied to the structure of the lines which form part of a poem, and their relation as regards rhyme and length and arrangement to one another. English metres, if we include the older forms, are so numerous that they have perhaps never been completely classified. The following are the most common in recent use:—

A. **Rhymed Metres.**—These are either *continuous* when the rhymes follow at the end of each line, or in *stanzas.*

I. *Continuous Rhymed Metres.*—These are named from the foot which forms the unit of each line.

1. **Iambic** Measures, the most frequent in English verse, have an even number of syllables in the line; as only by this arrangement can the terminal rhyme be made to fall on an accented syllable. An exception occurs where the line ends with a double rhyme, and there is a surplus syllable; *e.g.*,

"Upón a móuntain
Besíde a foúntain."

The Iambic verses in general use in English are—

(*a*) *Quadrisyllabic.*

"To mé the róse
No lónger glówS."

(*b*) *Octosyllabic or Tetrameter.*

This is the measure of our lighter narrative from Chaucer to Burns, and that most commonly used by Sir Walter Scott.

> "The wár that fór a spáce did fáil,
> Now trébly thúndered on the gale."

Scott frequently breaks its monotony by *Variations*, as the introduction of Trochees; *e.g.*,

> No faíry fórms in Yarrow's bówers
> Tríp o'er the wálks, or ténd the flowers,

and by the introduction of six syllable Iambic lines with an interposed couplet,

> "It fréshly bléw and stróng,
> Where from high Whitby's cloistered pile,
> Bound to St. Cuthbert's Holy Isle,
> It bóre a bárk alóng."

(*c*) *Decasyllabic or Pentameter.*

This is our heroic or epic verse, used since its introduction by Chaucer in the Canterbury Tales as the vehicle of our graver narrative and didactic verse. It is the favourite measure of Dryden and of Pope.

> "Come, síster, cóme, it sáid or seémed to say,
> Thy pláce is hére; sad síster, cóme awáy"

Milton employs it in Lycidas, varied by the occasional introduction of Trochees and by an irregular disposition of the rhymes. The following passage is by these means, and a careful regard to quantity and pause, a model of melody:—

> "Alas! what boots it with incessant care,
> To tend the homely, slighted shepherd's trade,
> And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?
> Were it not better done, as others use
> To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
> Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair."

(*d*) *The Alexandrine* or twelve-syllable Iambic :—

"That like a wounded snake drags its slow length along."

(*e*) *The Fourteen*-syllable Iambic. This is sometimes broken into two lines of four and three feet respectively; but in the following, as generally in Chapman's "Homer," it is really a single line :—

"Betwíxt Atrídes, king of mén, and Thétis' gódlike són."

2. **Trochaic** Measures.—These are only pure when the line ends with a double rhyme, as, "On the mountain, By a fountain." The term is applied to verses of two or more Trochees, followed by a short syllable, the shortest of which, *e.g.*, "Tumult cease, Sink to peace," "Dreadful screams, Dismal gleams," are seldom if ever dignified unless mixed with others, as in Shirley's "Sceptre and crown Must tumble down." There are only two English measures of consequence under this head—

(*a*) *The Seven-syllable Trochaic*—

"Nót a stép is oút of túne,
Ás the tídes obéy the móon."

"Blíss, a nátive óf the ský,
Néver wánders. Mórtals try."

This is Shakespeare's "butter-woman's rank to market," and it may be made to jingle—

"If a hart do lack a hind,
Let him seek out Rosalind."

But it is capable of a higher music, as in Ben Jonson's

"Queen and huntress, chaste and fair,"

(*b*) *The Fifteen-syllable Trochaic; e.g.*—

"Í, the heír of áll the áges ín the fóremost fíles of tíme."

"Ón the pállid búst of Pállas, ríght abóve my chámber dóor."

Note that the pure and mixed Trochaic, *i.e.*, the double and single rhymed ending, are often made to alternate :—

> "Gentle river, gentle river,
> Lo the streams are stained with gore !"

There are no pure *Spondaic* measures in English, though we have spondees in blank verse; *e.g.*, "As if the ebbing air had been *one wave*"; and elsewhere either a spondee or two monosyllabic feet; *e.g.*—

> "As yet the early rising sun
> Has not attained his noon.
> *Stay ! stay !*"

3. **Dactylic**, with other trisyllabic measures, give a rapid movement to the verse. We have—

(*a*) Two feet, followed by a line with one dactyle and a long syllable—

> "Táke her up ténderly,
> Líft her with cáre."

(*b*) Two feet repeated, followed by one and a trochee—

> "Cánnon to ríght of them,
> Cánnon to léft of them,
> Vólleyed and thúndered."

(*c*) Three and a final syllable—

> "Mérrily, mérrily sháll I live nów."

(*d*) Three and a Trochee—

> "Knów ye the lánd where the cypress and myrtle."

4. **Anapæstic** measures have—

(*a*) Three feet; *e.g.*, in the alternately rhyming verse of Shenstone—

> "Not a píne in my gróve is there seén
> But with téndrils of wóodbine is bóund."

(*b*) Four feet; *e.g.*—

"She is fár from the lánd where her yóung hero sléeps."

"'Tis the lást rose of súmmer left bloóming alóne."

Note that the unnatural slurring of "rose" is a flaw in the last line.

5. **Amphibrachs** are comparatively rare in English; but we have—

(*a*) Two, alternating with one and an Iambus—

"The bláck bands | came óver
The Álps and | their snów."

(*b*) Two successive—

"Most friéndship | is féigning,
Most lóving | mere fólly."

(*c*) Four—

"There cáme to | the shóre a | poor éxile | of Érin."

II. **Stanzas.**—The variety of arrangement in English verse is almost indefinite. A volume might be written on our lyric measures alone, and new writers are constantly introducing fresh combinations. The following are among the successions of most familiar recurrence:—

(*a*) The *Iambic Quatrain* of the Ballads, 8 and 6 syllables alternating—

"The Górdons góod in English blóod
They stéeped their hóse and shóon;
The Líndsays fléw like fíre abóut
Till áll the fráy was dóne."

The verse of the old Ballads is generally irregular to excess, iambs and trochees being tumbled about on no apparent system.

(*b*) The *Stave of Six Lines;* i.e., four of 8 syllables and two of 6—

"What tho' like commoners of air
We wander out, we know not where
But either house or hal',

Yet nature's charms, the hills and woods,
The sweeping vales and foaming floods
Are free alike to all."

(*c*) Another *Stanza of Six Lines;* i.e., four of 8 syllables and two of 4—

"I taught thy manner's painting strains,
The loves, the ways of simple swains,
Till now, o'er all my wide domains
Thy fame extends;
And some, the pride of Coila's plains,
Become thy friends."

(*d*) The *Elegiac Decasyllabic Quatrain*, familiar in Gray's "Elegy."

(*e*) The *Seven-lined Decasyllabic Stanza*, sometimes called the *Chaucerian Heptastich* or *Rhyme Royal.*

(*f*) The *Spenserian Stanza* of nine lines, eight being decasyllabic and the last an Alexandrine.

(*g*) The *Ottava Rima*, of Byron's Don Juan, eight decasyllabic lines.

(*h*) The *regular Sonnet* of fourteen decasyllabic lines.

The relation of the last four may be thus expressed; the same figures marking the lines rhyming together—

Sonnet.		Heptastich.	Spenserian Stanza.	Ottava Rima.
1		1	1	1
2		2	2	2
2		1	1	1
1		2	2	2
1		2	2	1
2		3	3	2
2		3	2	3
1			3	3
3	3		3	
4	4			
3	3			
4	4			
5	3			
5	4			

B. **Unrhymed Metres.**

I. **Blank Verse.** This is the only unrhymed metre of much consequence in modern English. Its normal form is the regular pentameter Iambic, but it is more flexible than any of our other measures. "Custom cannot stale its infinite variety," which the following examples may serve to show—

"When dówn alóng by pléasant Témpe's stréam."
5 accents regular.

"Léft for repéntance nóne for párdon léft."
5 accents irregular.

"Ínfinite wráth and ínfinite despáir." 4 accents.

"To the lást sýllable of recórded tíme." 4 accents.

"Rócks, cáves, lákes, féns, bógs, déns, and shádes of deáth," 8 accents.

Blank verse, generally restricted to ten syllables, sometimes assumes the license of adding an eleventh; *e.g.*,

"My very noble and approved good masters,"

but this ought not to be imitated.

II. **Choral Measures**, as in Milton's "Samson Agonistes"—

"The sún to mé is dárk,
And sílent is the móon
When shé desérts the níght
Híd in her vácant ínterlúnar cáve."

III. The English **Hexameter,** in which an attempt has been made to preserve the order of the classic feet while substituting accent for quantity—

"Whén she had | pássed it | séemed like the | céasing of | éxquisite | músic."

"Spéaks and in | ácents dis·cónsolate | ánswers the | wáil of the | ócean."

Imitations of ancient metres are, as a rule, not to be commended: they are little better than parodies.

The rules of Prosody are in general of more avail to Critics than to Poets. Young practitioners in verse should be advised—

(1) To attain a clear idea of the difference between accent and quantity, and to accent naturally.

(2) To practise regular rhyming metres before attempting blank verse or irregular measures.

(3) To remember that verse is a small though essential part of the distinction between Prose and Poetry.

The further we advance in questions of Style, the less can we hope to learn from rules. *Accuracy* can be taught; *Energy* can at least be aimed at; but *Beauty* must be the outcome of the writer's nature, and is in a large degree a law to itself. To write musically, we require a good ear; to write poetically, we have need of imagination: but every one can write correctly if he choose, and instances constantly occur to prove how much the attentive study of good models, the sedulous and careful practice of composition, the habit of never reading a sentence without trying to understand it, and never writing a sentence without considering what it is likely to convey to the reader, may do to promote the vigour of Style.

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